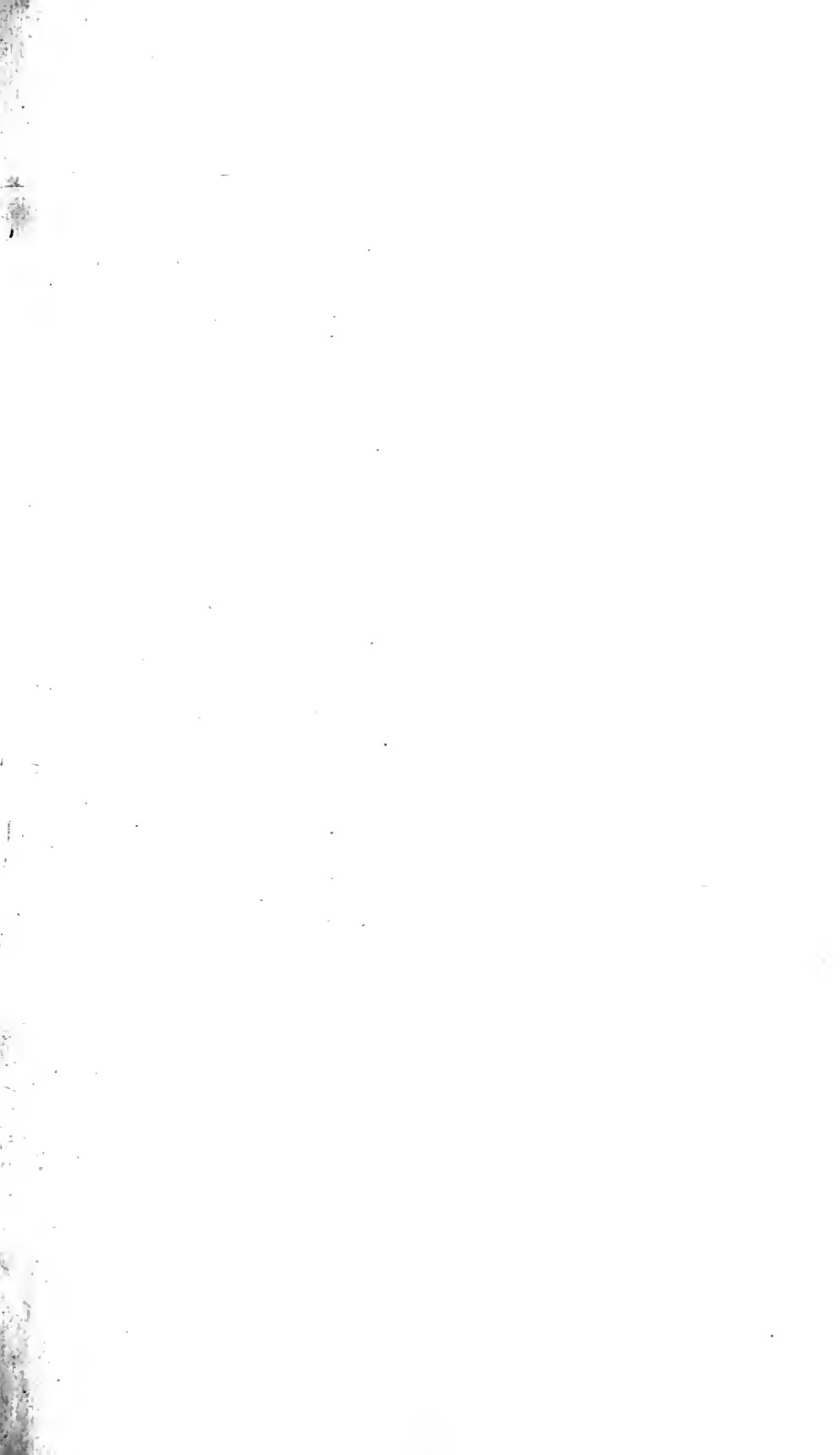




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WALTER GORING.

WALTER GORING.

A Story.

BY

ANNIE THOMAS,

AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "ON GUARD," "THEO LEIGH," ETC.

"And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at best a contradiction still."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

SHIRLEY BROOKS, Esq.,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF ESTEEM FOR HIM AS A FRIEND,
AND ADMIRATION FOR HIS BRILLIANT ACHIEVEMENTS

AS A WRITER,

THIS STORY IS (BY PERMISSION)

Dedicated

BY

THE AUTHOR.

Genl Ray 15 Dec 52 Mortlake-30



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WALTER GORING.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUSINS.

THEY were the children of twin sisters—the lovely hostess and her handsome guest—and they had been brought up together as brother and sister, which fact must be accepted in extenuation of any peculiar interest either may display for the other in the course of this story.

Moreover, in addition to having been brought up together on terms of fraternal intimacy, they had, when arrived at years of discretion, sunk the fraternity for a time, and fallen in love with one another. Their passion had not prospered; that is to say, the lady had taken fright at matrimony on nothing a year, and had released her cousin-lover with a great deal of affected magnanimity and real affection.

She had been Horatia Leslie in the days of this exhibition of feminine devotion, and shortly after it she had married a Mr. Walsh, an elderly gentleman, who was a merchant by profession and an artist by taste. His perfect cultivation of the latter quality had induced him to select Horatia Leslie for his wife, and the selection did him credit.

She was a grand looking woman—fair and large, but not tall. A woman with a wealth of golden hair and a pair of haughty blue eyes, and a manner that absorbed a great deal of attention, and seemed to expect it. Withal, a woman with a good head and a sound heart, and a never-flagging interest in my hero, the boy who had been brought up with her—the lover whom she had rejected—the man whose good she most ardently desired—Walter Goring, my hero.

He, Walter Goring, had never reviled her, or bewailed himself, in consequence of that rejection. He had seen that she had done wisely in pausing on the brink, and availing herself of the best match that offered. Laughingly in his sentimental boyhood he had been wont to call her “his goddess;” earnestly in manhood he continued to apply the title to her, to confide in her as his sister, and to make her

house his home as often as it seemed convenient to him.

He had commenced life with being disappointed about going into the army. Then he had gone into a militia regiment. Then he had gone into debt and difficulties, and, to pay the former had taken to writing novels that overflowed with vitality—well-bred horses, well-bred women, and well-stored wine—and that were very successful from the commercial point of view. He had varied the amusements by fighting for Italian liberty, and getting ever so slightly wounded, and by publishing pretty little square volumes of poems, plagiarised from the German of Heine and others.

Though his cousin, Mrs. Walsh, had not chosen to marry him herself, she was far from being indifferent as to his future. She knew his best and his worst; his recklessness and remorsefulness; and, above all things, she did ardently desire that he should marry money, not having any of his own. As a captain in a militia regiment his expenses far exceeded his receipts, consequently he was compelled to write as a task occasionally, and so do himself sparse justice as a literary man.

And it was as this latter that the grand blonde

valued him. She wanted him to cut that spurious soldiering, and get into regular harness in the army of literature; and to enable him to do this she knew that he must marry a wife with some fortune besides her face.

This night of her introduction to the reader she had assembled a goodly number of well-dowered ones for Walter's sake, down in her well proportioned rooms in her house at Roehampton. She gave a ball to celebrate something in connection with her consin, either his birthday or his "return" from some place or other, and she had secured an heiress from Bengal for him for the first waltz.

But after that first waltz Mr. Goring—or Captain Goring, as people who imagined him proud of being a militiaman called him—had behaved very badly in the eyes of all prudent people. He had danced all the round dances, and retired to sequestered nooks, in the big conservatory, between the same, with a Miss St. John, who was notoriously penniless, and who seemed to incline very favourably towards the young man who wrote and danced with equal vigour and ease.

Twice the pair under consideration—Charlie St. John and her partner—had done the "back steps"

down between the flowers to a shady spot at the end where no chaperones did dwell, and twice Mr. Walsh had come upon them, offering to find them fresh partners and strawberry ices, and twice they had thanked him with suavity, and then revolved away from his immediate notice to the strains of an inspiring waltz, played by a military band. They stepped together well in fact, and so defied censure, after the manner of pig-headed people.

At last Mrs. Walsh got very angry with her cousin Walter. Wallflowers, with the perspicuity of their order, thought that the {extra compression of the hostess's lips, as she at last sent a peremptory summons to "Mr. Goring" (she abominated the militia, and never called him "Captain"), was due to her annoyance at his defalcation from her side; but they were wrong, after the manner of their kind. She saw that the heiress from Bengal was huffed with humanity because Walter Goring preferred Miss St. John's style of dancing and Miss St. John's style of talking to her own. And Mrs. Walsh knew that poor Walter could no more afford to offend heiresses than he could to marry Charlie St. Johns; so at last Mrs. Walsh made a clever move, and sent Mr. Prescott—Charlie St. John's brother-in-law—

to stop the gyrations of the pair, and then divide them.

There were always a lot of military men at Mrs. Walsh's parties. Though her husband was an artist, and a clever one too, she never sought to draw recruits from the ranks of the army of literature and art; but nearly the whole of the British army had at various times circulated through her saloons. The home of the merchant prince at Roehampton ranked with the girls they left behind them in the regretful memories of many scores of men when ordered on foreign service.

The supper was splendidly done on this special occasion. Lovely, fair, foolish Mrs. Prescott—Charlie's sister—looked about eagerly for Miss St. John, in order to express her admiration of it when it was served; but Charlie had vanished, therefore Ellen Prescott fell upon her hostess instead.

"Mr. Prescott is telegraphing for me to go, and I can't find my sister," she said, smilingly.

"I saw her waltzing down a lot of plants just now, with Mr. Goring," Mrs. Walsh replied, coolly; she rarely, if ever, called him "My cousin" or "Walter" to a third person; consequently an amiable majority ignored the relationship, and

affected to be scandalized at Mrs. Walsh's great intimacy with that young man.

"I hardly like to take her away; but Mr. Prescott says the distance is great, and so it is, you see," Mrs. Prescott replied dubiously; and then being silly, Mrs. Prescott hazarded a feeble smile of partial intelligence at Mrs. Walsh, who detested her, and so immediately resented it.

"Mr. Goring is a flirt, and won't scruple to retain your sister as long as she suffers herself to be retained by him," Mrs. Walsh said coldly, and her words were iced by the sight of the Bengal heiress bowing her gracious adieus. She felt very angry with her cousin, and very angry with the girl whose twinkling feet had been going in unison with his all the night. It was not for this end that she had given this ball. Ralph and herself had rather sought the heiress, who was blessed with an ungainly form, an awkward temper, and fifty thousand pounds. And when Mrs. Walsh went out of her way to make plans, she did not like to see them fail.

Moreover she knew that her husband would be very much annoyed. Ralph Walsh was good-nature and brotherly-kindness itself to Walter Goring; but Ralph Walsh had no strong sympathy with Walter's

semi-military philandering propensities, and none whatsoever with Walter's habit of asking him to back bills. "If he only worked steadily, he might make a glorious income and marry whom he pleased," he would say to his wife. But then, unfortunately, Walter would not work steadily; he would only work by fits and starts; in fact, despite those squarely bound poems of "Love and Life," he had been more oppressed with the duns than the bays heretofore; and the Walshes knew that it was so, and desired to see him free and unfettered as money alone enables a man to be.

They rather over-rated the danger he was in on this occasion. Miss St. John was not a beauty; she was only good-looking and rather clever; neither of which facts were very patent to a man bent on whirling round double time to a brilliantly-played waltz tune. Even when they had taken a turn round the conservatory to the detriment of the plants and gold fishes and plaster casts, and had finally rested on a couch at the end; the conversation had scarcely been of a sentimental order.

"Mrs. Walsh's parties are the best I know," Miss St. John had said.

"Rather too many artillery fellows, I think," he replied.

"I don't think there can be too many," the girl rejoined; "civilians do very well for every-day life; but a ball is fairy land, and they're out of place in it."

"That's pleasant for me to hear."

"But you are not a civilian, are you? Mrs. Walsh called you Captain Goring."

"I hardly like to tell you what I am after your former speech."

"Well, I fancied that you were two of the things that I'd most desire to be were I a man."

"And they are?"

"Soldier and writer."

"You can be the latter as a woman, surely. I'm only in the militia, and that I mean to cut."

"I should think so," she said, contemptuously; and then they got up and took another turn round the room. As they were pausing to breathe, Mr. Prescott came up to them, and said somewhat abruptly,

"Your sister wants you, Charlotte, are you ready to go?"

"Of course I am, Robert," she replied, promptly.

"Just one turn more," Walter Goring whispered, putting his arm round her as he spoke, and the clanging band brought out the stirring *Sturm March Galop* in a way that utterly disabled her resolution to attend to her brother-in-law's request. "I wonder if they've any dancing in heaven?" he said, as they came to a forced conclusion in consequence of the band stopping.

"Don't be airing your unorthodox sentiments here, please, Walter," Mrs. Walsh exclaimed, coming up to them at the moment. "I wanted you just now; why didn't you come to me when I sent for you?"

"I did go to your high place among the elect up at the other end. I went three times running; not so much running as in rapid succession; but you didn't seem to want me; you were not looking out for me."

"Conceited boy," she whispered, as she passed along.

"Now I must find my sister," Charlie St. John said, rather dejectedly.

"At any rate sit down and rest yourself a little first, Miss St. John," he said, steering her as he spoke away once more across the tessellated pavement, and

amongst the flowers to a sort of divan at the end of the conservatory. When they were seated, she began speaking of the dreariness that invariably set in after any pleasure, more especially for women who had nothing important to distract their attention.

"But it's as easy for women to have their own stand-point, as it is for men, isn't it?" he replied.

"For some women, I suppose; for women who can write or paint, or do anything that has a life in itself."

"I shall see you coming out with a three-volume novel before long, I'm convinced," he said, laughing.

"As if I could."

"As if you couldn't."

"I should be so bitterly ashamed of myself if it were said to be bad."

"Oh, I see, you're ambitious; you want to mark an epoch in literature with your first work."

"No, I don't; but I feel disgusted that I can't do anything, save bore myself and others."

"The fact is, you're discontented at not having made a success before you have tried for it," he replied. And then they had a long talk on the subject, and forgot that Mrs. Prescott was waiting for her sister.

When at last they remembered this fact, they came out from amidst the flowers into the full blaze of the ball-room unconcernedly enough. A heavy cannonade from a full battery of eyes was brought to bear on them at once, on the girl indeed a trifle more severely than on the man. But Charlie St. John was fully equal to the position. She did not attempt to give back shot for shot, glance for glance, as she slowly threaded her way through the throng to her sister's side, but she showed herself to be utterly unmoved by them. Mrs. Prescott greeted her with a reproachful face, and the querulous question,

“Oh, Charlie, why did you dance so much with that Captain Goring?—and why did you go into that conservatory when Mr. Prescott wanted you?”

“I went there to please myself, Ellen; I stayed to talk to Captain Goring.”

As she answered this, her brother-in-law came up to them to say their carriage was just called, with an expression on his face that made Charlie feel that she had offended him bitterly in something, which she might expect to hear of later.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. WALSH.

As soon as the last carriageful of guests had rolled away from the door, and before Walter Goring could come back to the ball-room, after speeding his cousin's latest guests, Mr. Walsh said to his wife,

"Miss Haflen " (Miss Haflen was the appendage to the fifty thousand pounds) "didn't make the impression desired, it appeared to me."

"Walter's foolish to the last degree," Mrs. Walsh replied crossly; then she added laughingly, "I might just as well have married him myself, mightn't I, Ralph, as far as he's concerned?"

"As far as I'm concerned, I prefer things as they are," he replied.

"Well, but he does go on in such a foolish way; he's a dear fellow, of course, but I am getting out of patience with him; he told me this morning that he

couldn't work here, and that he must have chambers in town. If he goes to town he'll do nothing, you know."

As she spoke, Walter Goring came back into the room. "Whom are you back-biting now, my goddess?" he asked, carelessly.

"You, naturally; and be careful how you call me that before people."

"Too late, too late; you should have broken me into discretion before, shouldn't she, Ralph?"

"I wish she'd go to bed now, and let us have a cigar," Mr. Walsh replied.

But Mrs. Walsh did not feel at all inclined to go to bed. "You'll stay up all night if I leave you, Ralph, and then to-morrow I shall suffer for it, for you will both be too lazy and tired to go out with me, and I must go to town."

"I must stay at home and work to-morrow," Walter said, commencing a march up and down the room.

"The desire for 'work' curiously enough, always seizes you when I want you," Mrs. Walsh said, coldly. Then she rose, saying "Good-night," and was about to pass out of the room, when Walter stopped her.

"You're not annoyed with me in reality? You don't mean it seriously?" he asked affectionately.

She had been so much to him all her life that he could not bear the slightest cloud between them. "Come," he added, raising her hand to his lips, "I'll do anything you like, save make up to Miss Haflen; she looks to me like a nigger with a rush of blood to the head. You having been my boyhood's dream, can't expect me to come down to the Haflen in my maturity."

"Very well," she said, laughingly. "I'll forgive you for having slighted my friend, if you, on your part, will promise not to flirt with Miss St. John. You know you neither of you have a penny, and you couldn't marry her until you are both well-stricken, which isn't a desirable prospect to start with."

"Let Miss St. John alone, if you please, and I'll promise anything."

"That's right. Good night."

"Good night. Pass on my queen — forgiven," he said, bowing down almost to the ground before her; while Mr. Walsh made a mental sketch of the scene, and resolved to paint it in a series he contemplated from "Idylls of the King."

"It would be a shame to wish him to sacrifice

himself to that odious Miss Haflen," Mrs. Walsh thought as she wended her way upstairs; "yet what is to become of him if he won't work more than he has hitherto. That old Mr. Goring will never die; and even when he does it may happen that poor Walter has built his hopes on sand. At any rate, whether or not, he shall not get entangled with Miss St. John. I can't bear her."

The two men did not stay smoking very long after Horatia left them; but when Ralph went to bed Walter Goring sauntered away to the study, and sat down to read. Very soon the book dropped from his hand, and he began to think instead.

Then passed before his mind visions of the old days when he was quite a boy, before he had even begun to think about a career, when his widowed aunt and his little cousin Horatia first came to live in his father's house. He remembered how he had immediately put his neck under the yoke of the imperial little beauty; how he had worn her chains for years, always rattling them in a way that redounded to her honour and glory, when others were by to hear them chink. He recalled his first burst of genuine jealousy, which had arisen from such slight cause as a curate who insisted on many inter-

views previous to Miss Leslie's confirmation, and which had resulted in Walter making an offer which was accepted by his gracious goddess. His love's young dream had been very golden while it lasted. No brighter beauty than his betrothed bride had ever woven a chain for any man's heart. But it broke at last, this chain, or rather it melted away. His father, loving the girl as his own daughter, still could not wish to see her his son's wife. As for the twin sisters, they wept in each other's arms, till Horatia took them to task somewhat sharply about it.

"You don't think either Walter or I are going to be idiotic enough to die over it, do you? And as for you, mamma, you needn't be afraid that I shall be an old maid on your hands."

She kept her promise, and married Ralph Walsh, as has been seen; and Walter buried his dead, and resumed his old adoring manner to her, with her husband's cordial permission, and flirted freely with other women. But for all that, he had not met the woman yet who had the power to banish the image of his dearest friend—his beautiful "goddess"—from his heart.

To-night, though he had been seeming to improve

the shining hours very much to his own satisfaction, Walter Goring was feeling something very near akin to jealousy, yet it was not that either. Mrs. Walsh was far too pure a woman, far too proud a matron, far too dear and precious a thing in his eyes for him even to own to himself that another man than her husband might perchance experience a pang about her. But sometimes it seemed to him that she was a little too gracious to other people, "and these cads don't know where to draw the line," he thought. She gave her smiles and a good deal of her best manner to a good many men, "even to beasts in the line," he told himself. Not that she came off her pedestal, but she suffered adoring legions to come up to the foot of it, and worship in the light of day. The moon is unassailable in her beauty, purity, and dazzling tenderness; still misguided brooks make mistakes, and think the shining is done expressly for them, individually. Mrs. Walsh was as the moon, and—— Well, there are some things hard to understand; and Walter Goring lived in dread of the majority of her acquaintances misunderstanding them.

Mrs. Walsh was as the moon, and "by Jove!" he said, springing to his feet, "the moonlight is

dying in the grey dawn. What a row the goddess will make to-morrow if she finds I have been up all the time soliloquising, or, as she will have it, smoking. She's right about me never working, or doing any other good in life. Well, perhaps if she had stuck by me I should have done something better than write rattling novels." Then he went off to bed at last, with a growl on his lips at her defalcation, the first he had ever uttered.

She meanwhile was thinking more sadly than she had ever thought before of Walter Goring. It is always agreeable to a woman to imagine that a man has not entirely got over any tender feeling he may at one time have had for her. She may not wish him to be actually regretful about her, but assuredly if he ever lets her know of the liking, she will take pleasure in the thought that a little of it lives still.

Now Horatia had been entirely conversant with every phase of feeling through which Walter Goring had passed on her account. He had been as boisterous a young bear as most boys are when that before-mentioned confirmation together with the curate brought his passion to a crisis. She had seen him in the smilingly semi-idiotic state of serene satisfaction in his wooing and probable

chances of winning. She had seen him hopelessly despondent when his papa began to scowl and say prudent but unreasonably unpleasant things. Above all, she had seen him sob like a child, or rather like the loving man he had become suddenly, when she told him that she herself had put an end to the struggle for supremacy between love and duty, by accepting Ralph Walsh. Walter had never reviled her; nevertheless her marriage with the amiable elderly merchant had been a bitter draught to swallow. At first Ralph Walsh treated his wife's cousin and former lover with a good-natured show of tolerance that was aggravating to the object of it to the last degree. But after a time, as Walter merged into more complete manhood, and satisfaction with things as they were, Mr. Walsh began to take a different and more exalted view of him. It was never actually said between the husband and wife that they felt themselves to have been instrumental in unsettling Walter, and making him a trifle more careless as to his lot in life than it is well for a man to be. But whenever Walter was unsettled and careless, each knew what the other's sentiments were on the subject. Mr. Walsh did not carry his love and regard for the

generally bright clever young fellow to the point of wishing himself dead, in order that the bright clever young fellow might marry his widow ; but he sincerely wished to see Walter happy with some one else. "It's a great pity that he thinks Miss Haffen like a nigger with a rush of blood to the head," Ralph said dreamily to his wife that night, before he fell asleep ; "50,000*l.* is no joke. He'll never get much from his uncle, I'm afraid."

"Then he'll be driven to work," the lady replied ; "and I'd rather see him work well than married to an heiress, when it comes to the point."

"I suppose you'll take care to keep Miss St. John away from your next ball, my dear ?"

"Of course I shall," Mrs. Walsh replied promptly. "Dancing the whole night with one man is bad taste, and I won't have *that* displayed in my room ; besides, if she flatters Walter about his books, as she does you about your pictures, he will make the mistake of thinking her peculiarly interested in him. Men are such conceited boobies !"

"I don't fancy she flatters me about my painting."

"Oh, you take all that glib nonsense for gospel truth always. She is a humbug, I tell you, Ralph ;

and I'm not prejudiced. I don't dislike her; in fact, she doesn't exist for me. It's impossible to dislike any one of whom one never thinks."

After uttering this, Mrs. Walsh refused to say any more. She was an essentially moderate woman usually in the matter of expressing her opinion; but to-night, for some cause or other, she felt incapable of expressing herself moderately about Walter.

In truth, she was rather agitated by a thought that had occurred to her—a thought which she could neither crush nor check, do what she would.

According to her wont, she had circulated very freely and very fast with many of her military guests to waltz and galop strains, and she feared that Walter, whose hatred of these men was patent to her, was about to develop jealousy on the subject. Her cheeks flushed as she thought it.

"He surely can't nurse such a feeling in relation to me, after all the frank love I've shown him," she said to herself; and yet would it have been so very unnatural that he should have done so, after all that had gone before? "If he is going to make a fool of himself, he must be taught to remember that I am a married woman," she went on. But how to teach him? That was the thing!

CHAPTER III.

A PAIR OF ADVISERS.

THE Walshes' house was down at Roehampton: the Prescotts lived in one of the dark, solemn Bayswater squares. Charlie therefore had good and reasonable grounds for hoping that any annoyance her brother-in-law and sole guardian might be feeling with her would die out during the drive home. That something in her manner had annoyed him she felt very sure, from the sharp, quick step with which he had come upon her in the Walshes' conservatory, and the cold tone in which he had cut into her conversation with Walter Goring with the words—"Your sister wants you directly, Charlie." She was sure from this that he was displeased with her. But she was in utter darkness as to the cause.

Mr. Prescott's wrath was perhaps the hardest

cross Charlie St. John had to bear, and this not because she feared, but because she despised it. Eight years before the opening of my story, her father, a naval officer, after having lived like a grand seigneur all his life, died insolvent, leaving one son and two daughters to the guardianship of Mr. Prescott the lawyer, who had been trying to introduce something like order into Captain St. John's affairs for the last few years. A bachelor of forty, without a female relative whom he could place at the head of his establishment, Mr. Prescott found himself in a position of extreme delicacy through the undesirable confidence displayed in him by his old friend and client. Frank, the son, was the lesser evil of the three, for he was a lieutenant in the navy, away on the West Coast of Africa, an atom in the cause of the suppression of the slave-trade; but the girls were oppressive to the last degree.

At last, about six months after Captain St. John's death, Mr. Prescott put the case plainly and honestly before the elder girl, who was then about twenty. He told Ellen St. John that she and her sister were alone in the world, and penniless—that he was to all appearance their only friend—that she

especially was ill-fitted to battle with the world, and therefore that she had better enable him to befriend and protect little Charlie and herself by marrying him. It was a hard, prosaic, galling courtship; at least it would have appeared so to many women, but Ellen St. John was satisfied with it. He had been very kind to her at a time when other friends had stood aloof. He offered her peace and plenty, and both were essential to her well-being. He was "very old," she told herself, and rather round-backed, and his clothes did not sit upon him as did the clothes of the men who had been about her in the bright old days in her father's house. However, they had forgotten her, it seemed, since her father's death, and he, the man with the round back and the ill-fitting clothes, had remembered her. So she accepted the fate he offered smilingly and gratefully; and he took her home to his dull house in the Bayswater square, and sent Charlie, who was just fourteen, to school for four years.

At the expiration of those four years, Charlie was added to the establishment as a permanent member. She found Ellen as fresh, as fair and lovely, as utterly and entirely unruffled as of old, when all things had been different with them; and

remembering some of the old scenes and one of the actors in them vividly, she did marvel greatly at Ellen's blessed calm. She marvelled even more when she discovered that this calm happiness was no mere cloak, but that Ellen was in reality as satisfied as she seemed. Mrs. Prescott had, in truth, married her husband for the simple and excellent reason that he had asked her to do so. But having married him, she never gave a thought to anyone else ; she was, in fact, devoted to him, to the decent ordering of his house and to her children. He had done a good thing in obeying the dictates of that generosity which first impelled him to offer the fatherless, friendless girls a home on the only terms on which they could accept it. He had done very well, very wisely ; never in his life had he been so cared for, so considered ; in the satisfaction of his heart at the admirable manner in which virtue had been rewarded in his case, he frequently told himself that he had done wisely and well. He spoke thus during the first four years of his married life, while he had had to do with the elder sister alone.

Then Charlie came home and his troubles began. She was vivacious, high-spirited, and not at all

disposed to accept his dicta on all subjects under Heaven and on earth unquestioningly. She had seen little or nothing of the Prescotts during the four years that had elapsed since her father's death. Her holidays had been spent with some old friends of her father's who remembered her when they found that nothing was expected of them. She had seen little or nothing of them, and Ellen's letters had told her little or nothing. Mrs. Prescott's letters for the first year of her married life had been mere catalogues of dresses and bonnets. After that they became mere bulletins of baby's health and progress. Occasionally the young aunt felt her sister's babies to be little bores, and wished that Ellen would find something else to write about. But that was only because she had never seen them ; and maternal pride insisted on detailing the same thrilling experiences about number three as had been given at great length about number one.

Being generous-natured and grateful-hearted, she went back to the home her brother-in-law offered her, thoroughly disposed to fulfil every claim he had upon her affection and gratitude. He had been very good to her, she knew. What education she had had been his gift, secured by his care,

paid for with his money. True she had not been a free agent in the matter, it had all been arranged for her while she was too much of a child to think about it. But now she was no longer a child, and she did think about it, and was very grateful and well inclined towards her guardian brother-in-law.

Unfortunately the four years which had passed between the day of her coming home and the date of her introduction to the reader, had seen these feelings weaken, flag, wither, and then utterly crumble away. That there was fault on both sides there can be no manner of doubt. He had no forbearance, and she gave much provocation; had he only remembered in another spirit that all the might and power was on his side, she possibly would have bowed under it a little more gracefully than she did.

For four years a woman had sat at his fireside without having, to the best of his knowledge, a wish or a thought in opposition to wish or thought of his. She had yielded him an implicit obedience from the first moment of their union. A soft, sweet, smiling obedience, that strengthened his faith in his own infallibility. Clearly she never found him exacting or masterful, whatever his decrees. There-

fore when another woman—one, too, who had no such claim on his forbearance as his wife possessed—came, and not alone had, but expressed wishes and thoughts that were antagonistic to his own, Mr. Prescott was fairly staggered.

The history of those four years need not be written. The weariness of them may be well imagined, but the recapitulation of the incidents that deepened the weariness would not forward the action of the story. Suffice it to say that Mr. Prescott, though not absolutely unkind to her, had so worn out the slender original stock of patience possessed by his ward—had so chafed her by exercising authority about trifles, that now she not only disliked, but heartily despised him.

When they came into the light of the hall that night, she gave a hasty glance at Mr. Prescott's face, and there was the expression upon it which was most odious to her. Mr. Prescott's upper lip was of undue length at all times, but whenever he felt himself called upon to cavil at Charlie, it elongated itself portentously, it went down and folded itself severely over the under one in a way that caused him to look mean and unmerciful to an extraordinary degree. His back too always looked

rounder, his coat hung about him more loosely, and indeed his whole appearance was more irritating than imposing on such occasions. Charlie glanced at him, and saw clearly that there was a lecture in store for her; and he glanced at her and saw that the lecture would not be taken well.

Hers was a face that altered with every gust of feeling that swept over her soul. A dark, impassioned face, as has been said; a face which could soften to a rare degree when the chord of tenderness was touched, but that could also flash and flame in a way that cautioned many a man not to learn to love it and deem it necessary to the adornment of his home. A face whose ever-varying expression told plainly the rapid way in which the spirits of its owner travelled from the seventh heaven to the nethermost hell. You could read in that face that she had a marvellous capacity for feeling either pleasure or pain, that she had a great love of so much of her kind as were congenial to her, and a deep-rooted detestation of being regulated and controlled in minor matters. In fact, it was a face that told too much for safety. The few weak weapons with which she had to fight the battle of life were clearly visible to all beholders.

Pretty Mrs. Prescott had just the same soft pink tint on her round cheek when she came back to her home that night, as had been on it when she departed six hours previously. She was one of those women who never take anything out of themselves by getting in the least degree excited. She took all the little pleasures that came in her way willingly and quietly. Nothing ever carried her out of herself, as it were; and verily she had her reward: there was no reaction—no nethermost hell for her.

But with Charlie it was very different. Poor Charlie! Her nerves were too close to the surface for her place in the world. A word, a look, a something more intangible than either, a feeling that there had been an expression or a thought on another's face, or in another's heart, to which she and she alone of those present had been sympathetic,—any one of these things would steep her in a passionate pleasure that would have been delirium had her intellect not been more active at such moments than at any other. But those periods were so very brief, and the intervals between them so very long, and she invariably found all things so darkly dreary, and herself so thoroughly exhausted after one of them!

It was clear, or it would have been clear to anyone capable of reading her face, that she had tasted some such pleasurable excitement to-night, and that its influence was upon her still; reaction had not set in yet. There was a deep clearly-marked line across her brow—a line that was only visible when the girl had been strongly wrought upon—and her eyes gleamed like stars. But her face was very pale, and there came a slight quiver over her lips as she held out her hand to her brother-in-law and said,—

“Good night, Robert. I can come in and help you when I’ve taken off my dress, if you like, Ellen.”

Mrs. Prescott kissed her sister on the cheek.

“I shall not want you, dear—good night. Green is waiting up for me.”

“I want to speak to you before you go to bed, Charlotte,” Mr. Prescott said, and he marched as he spoke into the dining-room, which was dimly lighted by one gas-burner. He only called her Charlotte when he was very much displeased with her; she detested her name, and calling her by it was the surest means of upsetting her self-possession which he had yet discovered.

She had taken a step or two forward, but she paused on the mat in the doorway, and drew her cloak more closely around her.

"I'm tired and cold, Robert; won't to-morrow do as well?"

She spoke in a cool quiet tone; and when he looked at her to say, "Cold in July—nonsense!" there was a smile on her face.

"Are you coming in, Charlie?" he asked angrily.

She walked in and sat down by the table, neither facing him nor turning away from him: as she seated herself he said,—

"I think you must know how you're situated?" He paused, and she made no reply. "I say, you must be aware of your position?"

"I'm perfectly aware of it," she said, without looking at him. "Did you call me in here at this hour of the night solely to remind me of it, Robert?"

"I called you in to tell you once more what I have told you frequently before, that I am not pleased with the manner you choose to adopt when you are in society; there is an affectation of singularity, and a disregard of conventionality about it that I do not approve of at all."

Once more he paused, and when he did so, she heaved a small sigh, so small a one that it might have been only a breath of relief at his speech having come to a conclusion. Then she settled her head more comfortably against the high oak-backed chair, and looked steadily at the further end of the room.

“Do you hear me, Charlie?”

“Yes, I hear you,” she replied, just letting her eyes light upon him for an instant, and then hastily averting them,—the sight of that elongated lip was not to be endured.

“And you say nothing?”

“What can I say?”

“You openly disregard my wishes and advice.”

“I do neither, excuse me,” she replied rather more warmly; “I answered while there was anything to answer; I spoke while I had anything to say. You asked me if I knew what my position was, and I told you I did perfectly,—so I do, God help me!”

She started to her feet as she said this, and all trace of the composure which had been offensive to him had vanished, as she stood with her clenched trembling hand resting on the table, and her head

bent down in a proud abasement that might have touched any man's heart to tenderness.

"Don't take the Lord's name in vain about it," he said sanctimoniously; and when he said that the intensity fled from her face, and a smile came out of her eyes as she lifted them to his face, and her lips parted, and transformed in one moment the passionately earnest woman into a merry derisive girl.

"It's nothing to laugh about," he said testily, "impious talk is another of the things in which I can see no fun and no pleasure; however it's no use speaking kindly to you."

"You've never tried it, Robert."

Before the words were out of her mouth she bitterly repented having been betrayed into using them, for he had been very kind in act though not in word to her. However, the words were uttered, and they bore fruit instantaneously.

"I will not trouble you with any more of my remarks; in future I shall not presume to interfere with your conduct whatever it may be," he said coldly; then he added, "good night," without offering her his hand, and went away out of the room.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLIE THINKS THINGS OVER.

CHARLIE ST. JOHN'S impulse when her brother-in-law left the room in the manner recorded at the end of the last chapter, was to rush after him, and say some word expressive of penitence for that speech into which she had been goaded—of penitence, and a desire to be forgiven. But she did not obey her impulse. By this time she knew her man too well. The word would have fallen on ears rendered deaf by wounded self-love, and a determination to make her drink the cup of remorse, for her brief ingratitude, to the dregs. He was not a high-minded or generous-spirited man himself, but he had some faint notions of what those who are feel when they have been stung into the exhibition of some feeling less noble than themselves. He was resolved upon making her suffer to the full

extent of his power, partly because she had told him the truth in telling him that he had never tried speaking kindly to her, and partly because she had done a thing in the course of the evening of which he exceedingly disapproved. She had so deported herself with a man as to have been remarked ; she, a girl whose only chance in life, whose only chance of eventually removing the burden of herself from off him, lay in marriage. And the man with whom she had so deported herself was a man whom Mr. Prescott rather disliked than otherwise, and who was spoken of by his own friends as “ a fearful flirt, and utterly unscrupulous.” He told himself, and he told his wife, that Charlie could not be made to feel her sin too severely. “ I shall not say a word more to her myself, but you had better speak to her to-morrow, Ellen. If she gets spoken of with that fellow Goring, the only prospect I see for her is destroyed.”

“ But if they did come to like each other, and he was to marry her, Robert, would you mind then ? ”

“ Marry ! He’s not a man to do anything of that kind,” Mr. Prescott replied ; and in this he judged Walter Goring very rightly. As far as that

gentleman knew himself, he was not likely to marry for a good many years to come. Eternal smiles from a wife might grow to be monotonous, he had always felt. But there was never-ending variety in the smiles accorded him by the wives of his friends. There was a chance of some of the brilliancy vanishing from them, he knew, did he marry; so, in all honour he determined to retain them unaltered while he could. Unquestionably, Mr. Prescott was right. Walter Goring was not the man, of all others, whom an anxious guardian desirous of seeing his ward married, would wish to see that ward's companion in the soft, seductive atmosphere of a half-lighted conservatory on a summer night.

It never occurred to this prosaic middle-aged moral man—to this irreproachable husband and father—to this astute lawyer, who had ever been too earnest in his profession to look soft things at a lady till he looked them at Ellen after she became Mrs. Prescott—it never occurred to him that the handsome young novelist with the witching tongue could be for an hour alone with a pretty woman who interested him, without making love to her. Had Mr. Prescott but known what they had been

conversing about, and how they had been conversing about it during that terrible time in the conservatory, all his anger would have been assuaged, and all his fears would have died a sudden death.

A portion of this conversation has been already reported. She had avowed that she was discontented, and he, nearly a stranger, had reproved her for such discontent in a way that, truth to tell, had not made her like him at all the better for it. After that they had talked a little about art, and a little about literature, and she had learnt that there were mines out of which even she, weak as she was, might draw something had she but patience and perseverance. The scene, the soft light, the fragrant atmosphere of the flowers, were one and all affecting her in their different ways. But he sought no aid from one of them. He talked to her as he would have done to a sister, or (better still, when she came to think about it) a brother; and while Mrs. Walsh was accusing her of playing dexterously for a great stake out in that dim light, she was only feeling through the whole of her sensitive being that it was not more dim than that light which had been shed upon her mind, and that he must see it

and know it to be so, and yet—yet—why did he stay there, and talk to her ?

The last words she said to him—that were addressed to him alone that night—were uttered when she heard Mr. Prescott's voice summoning her to return to her sister's side and her normal life.

“ Here comes what I was wishing for just now—the announcement that it's time to go.”

“ Don't you wish it now ? ” he asked.

“ No, of course I do not. You have been causing me to feel ignorant and foolish to the last degree, but I thank you for it,”—she paused, and her head went up, and a frank, true woman's smile broke over her face as she added, “ and like you for it. Now, good-bye.”

She put her hand out, and he took it and shook it heartily—as he would have shaken a man's—not at all as those who only saw one side of Walter Goring imagined he would have shaken the hand of a girl to whose side he had been chained in the moonlight for half-an-hour.

“ Good bye ! You'll do something worth doing yet, if you try,” he said ; to which she replied,

“ I will try.”

And they were the last words he ever heard in private from Charlie St. John.

When Charlie St. John reached her room that night, she threw off her clothes and got herself into bed as rapidly as she could, in order to be able to think. It was absolutely essential to this young lady to be physically at ease before she could be mentally active. She could not think coherently, much less clearly, while in a position of bodily discomfort.

She was well aware of this peculiarity ; therefore to-night, being desirous of bringing all the powers of her mind to bear upon a certain subject, she made haste to secure the first condition of success by lying down and being at rest. She wanted to think out an idea which had been put into her head by a speech of Mr. Goring's, made in answer to one of hers : " It is easy for you to recommend me to find content and satisfaction in action, since I can't find it, like a caterpillar in a cabbage, in passively existing. You are a man, and can help yourself ; you can read and write, and travel——" she was running on, when he stopped her to say,

" And what on earth is there to prevent your reading and writing, and travelling, too ? If you

have a good, honest desire to do these things, you'll do them sooner or later, take my word for it. One need not be a man in order to read the best things that have ever been written, or to write what may be worth reading. As for travelling! that will come."

"Yes, I may read lofty things with a limited comprehension, and write out of the barrenness of an uncultivated mind: Never!"

"It rests with yourself to enlarge both, surely!" he had said, persuasively; then he had added, very kindly, "Other women have done very great things, Miss St. John; name a novelist of this age who has done nobler work than George Sand, or the author of 'Adam Bede,' or—since this seems to be a consideration with you—the value of whose work has been more fully and completely acknowledged by the world."

"You tell me to touch a star, and I have no wings. I'm utterly uneducated, as, of course, you perceive."

"Make wings for, by educating, yourself."

"I *can't*," she cried, passionately; "that's just it. I can't; I haven't the patience and perseverance. Above all, I haven't the incentive!"

“What incentive do you lack?”

“Every inspiring one. Supposing that I did work, and plod, and learn something? It would be to this end—that I might teach it again.”

“It’s the aim which animates the majority of those men whom you envy. We all hope to teach it again, whatever it may be.”

“Ah! but I meant that it would only be to deal it out by the yard—by the long, weary, weak yard—as it has been dealt out to me. But you don’t understand me. It would be that I might go out as a governess; and I’d rather be a cook.”

“You’re not fit for either place,” he said, laughing; “you would spoil the best food and the best children. If I were the father of a family, I should decline you in either capacity. But other women have made other paths for themselves; why should not you, since you’re tired of the one you’re treading?”

She looked at him, with her lips parted, and her eyes flashing.

“Tell me; would there be anything but the wildest, weakest folly in my making the attempt?”

“In what direction?”

"I don't know yet; in any of the paths you indicate."

"Unquestionably not, if you will work. Don't send a picture to the Academy before you can paint, or hope to storm Fame by the first story you get into a magazine; for, if I'm not much mistaken, it will be upon one or other of those paths that you'll adventure. You have an artist's soul, though you don't know it yet."

It was this portion of their conversation—this last sentence of his especially—on which Charlie St. John wanted to ponder. He had indicated the paths plainly enough which a clever woman, capable of working, and earnestly desirous of pursuing honourably, might pursue with success. He had indicated the paths, and he had appeared to accredit her with the possession of an artist's soul! Had he flattered her in this? or had he been mistaken, perchance? While striving to solve this question, she fell fast asleep, and forgot for a few hours the drearinesses of the life that was past, and the aspirations that were to gild the life that was to come.

At about four in the morning, the nursemaid came hastily into the room, and woke her suddenly, by asking,—

“Will you come and look at Ella, Miss Charlie?”

Ella was the eldest child—a seven-years’ old golden-haired epitome of all that is most charming and unintelligible in her sex. She was Charlie’s favourite—the only one who was never unwelcome in Miss St. John’s room, and unable to wear out Miss St. John’s patience.

“Let me come out on your lap, Aunt Charlie,” the child asked, as soon as Charlie reached her bedside, and little Ella’s face was so flushed, and her eyes so bright and pleading, that Charlie could not refuse the request she craved.

So a blanket was put over the child, and Charlie seated herself on a nursery chair with Ella in her lap; and the night wore away, and the morning light crept slowly into the room, and still she sat there almost motionless, but with no weariness in her manner, and no lack of tenderness in her face. At eight o’clock, when Mr. and Mrs. Prescott came into the room to see what was the matter, there was no trace in the eager eyes that were lifted to greet them of the defiant contempt which had dared censure in the Walsh’s drawing-room, or the cold reproach which had given force to the words, “You have never tried it.” There was no trace of either

feeling in the eager, sympathetic, mobile face that was lifted to greet them, or in the whispered words, "She's asleep now for the first time since four—I'm afraid it's fever, Ellen." But Mr. Prescott was not too apt to forget; therefore he only said coldly in reply, "If it is fever, you have been very foolish to keep her on your lap in this way. It can do the child no good, and may be the means of your laying yourself up, and then there will be two to nurse."

When he said that, she rose quickly but gently, very gently still, and went and put little Ella on the bed. Then she went away hurriedly to her own room, and when she reached it, the angry tears poured from her eyes, and she almost sobbed aloud,—"Anything, anything to get away."

CHAPTER V.

WAS SHE HIS FRIEND?

WHEN Mrs. Walsh came down to breakfast on the morning after her dinner-party, she found Walter Goring standing at the open window with the "Times" in his hand. Evidently he was reading vigorously. He gave it a sharp crack now and again, in the way in which people are apt to crack that stiff and bulky organ when they are anxious to get at its contents. Moreover, he did not mark his hostess's entrance—a certain proof that he was very much absorbed. She shut the cover of the tea-caddy sharply, but still he did not heed her. She went a little nearer, and glanced over his shoulder, and saw to her surprise that it was only the advertisement sheet, after all, which he was intently perusing. Then she went and rang the bell energetically, and spoke—

“Have you lost a pug dog, or is anybody imploring you to write and all shall be forgiven, that you can’t tear yourself away from the second column this morning, Mr. Goring?”

He had turned the instant she began to speak, and now he stood with her hand in his, bowing over it deferentially.

“Neither; forgive me for having been an unconscious monster for a few moments, and then congratulate me!”

“I do—what on? I thought by the rapt regard you were bestowing on the ‘Times,’ that one of your books had got what you all sigh for—a line of judiciously-mingled praise and blame, that would look well in the advertisement!”

“I’m even more fortunate. My uncle is dead!”

“And you are his heir?”

“In the order of things, whatever he had to leave comes to me.”

She turned away to the table, and busied herself with the cups, and he followed her, and seated himself close by her side, with his folded arms before him on the table.

“Is it such a much smaller piece of fortune in your eyes than the ‘line of mingled praise

and blame,' to which you alluded would have been ?”

She looked down upon him, and smiled that same grand sweet smile with which no husband could have quarrelled, even had he seen it bestowed on a hundred men. How it might have been had Mrs. Walsh reserved it entirely for the one, may not be known ; but Mrs. Walsh did not reserve it for the one, though the one thought that she did. She was very liberal with it.

“You will be so seldom in London,” she said. There was a touch of what a stranger might have been forgiven for mistaking for complaint in her tone.

“Why so ? I shall be in London quite as often as you care to see me,” he replied, raising his eyes to her face.

“Nonsense ; ungrateful nonsense, too, when we are always so glad to see you ; but now you will always want to be away at that place in those wilds.”

“You must come and stay there often, and then it will cease to be a wild ; by Jove ! I haven’t been there since I was a boy myself ; my recollection of it is that it is a glorious old place.”

She handed him his tea, and said, as she did so—

“You know that I’m truly delighted at any good fortune befalling you. You know that, don’t you? but I do wish your uncle had lived a little longer; you’ll go away and bury yourself, and be married before you know what you are about.”

“Oh, no, I won’t.”

“Oh, yes, you will; some day when you are feeling dull, when you can’t shoot or hunt, and are tired of your own society, you will fall a prey to one of the dairymaid-faced daughters of the land, who will be lurking about seeking to devour you.”

“You’re a trifle severe upon the daughters of the land, and a trifle mistaken about them too; the Norfolk women are some of the prettiest in England; besides, I’m never tired of my own society.”

“Is the place in Norfolk?”

“Yes.”

“Fearful distance from town,” she sighed. “We went to Yarmouth last year, and I nearly went mad on the journey.”

“Your sanity stood the test of the even longer journey we all took together the year before.”

Once more she glanced down at him and smiled.

She did not say, "You were with us then ;" but, somehow, he remembered that he had been, and felt that she remembered it too.

"What is the name of your place ?"

"Goring Place. Don't you think it odd that I haven't heard of my uncle's death in another way ?"

"You mean from his lawyer ?"

"Yes."

How is he to know where you are ?"

"He knows my Club ; he might write there."

"Perhaps he has," she said, laughing ; "for if you remember, you have not been up to town for the last five days."

He laughed and rose, pushing his cup away as he did so.

"You are only kind to remind me of it," he said, looking down on her upturned face. "Roe-hampton must not exercise this fascination over me any longer, though ; I must 'be up and doing'—that is to say, I must go up to town to-day."

"You had better go up in the carriage with Horatia then," Mr. Walsh said, entering at the moment ; and Mrs. Walsh replied : "Well, we will arrange it so, shall we, Mr. Goring ?" and, on his giving his assent, proceeded to pour into her

husband's friendly ear the tale of Walter Goring's wonderful good fortune.

"Your wife has promised that you and she will be my earliest guests," the fortunate man said, when the tale had been told.

"Of course we will, won't we, Ralph? We will take care to go to Goring Place before he has a wife to teach him to be cold and altered to us," the lady said, as she rose and walked towards the open French window. When she reached it, she paused, and asked—

"Will some one get me my gardening gloves? I must go and cut off those dead roses."

Some one got her the gardening gloves. Some one carried them out into the garden for her even.

"I won't keep you from Ralph," she said in a charmingly ingenuous tone, as she took them from him.

"You may keep me from whom you please."

"I shall never want to keep you from any one with whom it would be good for you to be."

"Don't you think I know it, my goddess?"

"It only vexes me to see you wasting your time in frivolous trifling; what *could* have induced you

to devote yourself in the way you did to that girl last night?"

"Oh, I don't know; here, let me cut that rose for you, you'll hurt your fingers."

So he cut the rose for her, and made his peace. At least he was certainly justified in supposing that he had done so, for no more was said to him on the subject of "that girl."

When she was tired of cutting off the dead roses she signified her intention of going in.

"And what am I to do all the morning?" he asked.

"What an idle question!"

"Indeed it is not. Walsh is painting, and you never have a book down here that is worth looking at."

"And you don't want to write?"

"I can't write here."

"Then come and read me what you have been writing lately, will you? and through it I will try to trace whose has been the latest influence over you before you reached Roehampton."

"Very well, I'll do that," he said. Then they went in together, and he got his MS. and read to her; and as she recognised herself considerably

idealized in it, she found it interesting and delightful to an extraordinary degree. While he, in reading it to her, and in listening to her well-modulated praises of it, forgot all about the girl whose ambition he had sought to fire in the conservatory the night before.

At two o'clock he went up to town with Mrs. Walsh, and found a letter at the Junior Carlton awaiting him from his uncle's lawyer. He learnt that it was all as he expected; he was the old man's heir and the master of Goring Place. He learnt also that the property was hampered in a way which he would find fully explained in a sealed letter—a secret note only to be delivered into his hands by the lawyer. Moreover, he learnt for the first time that he had a cousin, a girl of seventeen, to whom he was to be guardian.

When he rejoined Mrs. Walsh after reading his letter, she said anxiously—

“Something has gone wrong; what is it, Walter?”

She had never called him Walter before, and it touched him that she should do so now in this his first trouble.

“Nothing wrong; only it's the very deuce to

find myself at my age the guardian of a girl of seventeen."

"Is that the worst?"

"Can anything be worse?" he replied evasively.

"A daughter of your uncle's, I suppose? Oh, you'll soon be quit of your charge. I was afraid that the property might be hampered," she said interrogatively.

To this he only replied by asking her to advise him as to what he should do with his charge. "It's certain that she can't remain at Goring Place, if I am ever to go there."

"Of course she can't," Mrs. Walsh answered decisively; "but you must see what she's like first, and then write and tell me, and then I'll advise you. Remain at Goring Place! I should think not."

"For all I know, she may not choose to budge from there," he said moodily.

"But if you are her guardian you can make her."

"I think you know me well enough to know that I'm not the man to turn a girl out of a house that has been hers for seventeen years, if she wishes to stay in it; but it's time enough to talk

about these things. Where is he going? didn't you say Marshall & Snelgrove's?"

"Yes; Ralph has drawn me a design for the border of a dress, and I am going to have it in silver on white silk; it is late in the season for such extravagance; but there will be a few more parties worth dressing for, and you must have the 'set' down at Goring Place in the autumn and entertain the county."

"I wish I had never heard of Goring Place," he said, almost savagely; but Mrs. Walsh took no notice of his remarks, for the carriage stopped at the moment at the door of the shop where the design in silver on white was to be carried out.

He assisted Mrs. Walsh out of the carriage, and saw her safely into the shop, and then he stepped into the little silken-lined brougham and sat down to wait for her. He was a man on whom Nature had smiled at his birth, on whom women had smiled from his boyhood, and on whom now Fortune had smiled magnificently, unless report had largely exaggerated the possessions of the man whose heir he had this day heard himself declared to be. Only the night before, when he had believed himself to be entirely dependent on his own

efforts, he had talked a very bright philosophy, and believed in it. Now that wealth was assured to him, whether his future efforts were successful or not, he looked during these few minutes in which he dared to look what he felt—a bitterly disappointed man.

Nature had smiled upon him in so far as she had given him a face and a manner that prepossessed both men and women in his favour. She had smiled upon him, but she had not given him that god-like beauty which she bestows upon the heroes of most novels. His warmest admirers could only say of him that he was “a fine good-looking fellow.” Not even enthusiastic girlhood, looking upon him in the halo cast around him by the success of his very successful books, had ever been heard to declare him an Apollo. He had a fine brow, broad, open, and grandly intellectual, and back from it there swept a richly curling mass of bonny brown locks. His small delicately pointed beard and moustache were of a lighter brown, they were almost golden in fact, and they were so arranged as not to conceal the fine lines of his mouth and chin. For the rest there was little beauty in his face save in his eyes, which were

dark, deep-set, and as expressive as any other man's spoken words; they were in perfect unison with his voice, which was soft, deep, rich, suave and sonorous as a poet's ever is—or should be. It was a face, in short, that you liked well at first and better at last—a face that won upon you—a face that no one on whom it had ever been bent kindly could see averted with indifference.

The lawyer's letter had informed him that his uncle's funeral was to take place on Friday the 27th of July, and this was Wednesday. "I shall leave Shoreditch by the 2.40 train to-morrow. If you receive this in time, I hope you will be able to be there to go down to Goring Place with me to pay the last respect that can be shown to your uncle, and to receive, after the reading of the will, the sealed letter as soon as possible."

"Without doubt I shall go," he said to himself, and he said the same to Mrs. Walsh when they were driving back to Roehampton.

"What for? so soon?"

"In common decency I must attend the funeral of the man who has left me everything he had to leave."

"Including his daughter. I fancied that he was

buried already. Of course you must go to the funeral since you are able to do so ; when will you come back again ? ”

“ God knows ! ”

“ But I want to know also. Really, Mr. Goring, I never saw a man so dejected by good fortune before. Won’t you tell me what distresses you ?—if Ralph and I are not amongst your oldest, we’re amongst your warmest friends.”

She put her hand on his arm as she spoke, and bent forward to give force to her words. His eyes met hers gratefully, and he lifted the kind gentle hand to his lips, but he did not call her “ his goddess,” as he had done on a previous occasion.

“ Both Ralph and you are dear good friends to me, I know that very well.”

“ Treat me as such—tell me what distresses you ; it can’t be that you regret a man for whom you had no special regard, and whose death places you in your proper and fitting position ; it can’t be that.”

“ It is not that—I make no such pretence ; I’m thrown out of gear, that is all.”

“ And how long will you be away,” she asked with true feminine pertinacity, going back to the point that was most immediately interesting to herself.

“Probably not a week—certainly not more.”

“How very awkwardly you are placed about this unexpected cousin,” she said meditatively.

“Awkwardly, rather; to have a girl cropping up in this way in that quarter is enough to put any fellow out.”

“I wonder if her mother is alive, or if it was a secret marriage, or what the mystery has been,” Mrs. Walsh said quickly; “had you any idea that there was any old romance of the sort in your uncle’s life?”

“Not the slightest—and I rather fear that it will turn out to be a very shady sort of romance at best; probably some village amour repented of when the child grew up.”

“In that case I shall be but a poor coadjutor, for I have a slight prejudice in favour of gentlepeople. We won’t talk about her any more. I see she will be a bore to you; how I wish that she had never been born.”

How Walter Goring wished it too; but wishing was of no avail. He agreed that it would be just as well, perhaps, not to talk about her any more, until they knew something more definite concerning her. “It was the merest speculation on my part, re-

member," he said ; " the mother may have been wedded wife or injured maiden—a peeress or a peasant ; it's all one to me as far as the confounded nuisance of the daughter is concerned."

But Mrs. Walsh did not think it " all one " in the innermost recesses of her heart. Indeed she rather hoped that the " village amour " speculation would turn out to be a correct one. " He thinks too much of blue blood to go and make a fool of himself in that case," she said to herself. Mrs. Walsh had some vague ideas about finding a nice wife for Walter Goring at some future time. But she had a strong feeling against Walter Goring finding a nice wife for himself. She had got so into the habit of saying " Oh ! he ought not to marry yet," that she quite believed in the truth and justice of her statement.

The last evening at Roehampton which Walter Goring spent before taking upon himself the cares of a man of property was a very pleasant one. Mrs. Walsh had the art of making her house very like a home to him, and it seemed more homelike than ever this night. In the drawing-room he had his " own little table and reading-lamp," very near to hers ; quite near enough for her occasionally to re-adjust

the shade for him, and for them to give out little passages from their respective books for each other's delectation, without disturbing Ralph, who, overpowered by his arduous pursuit of art during the day, was accustomed to slumber in space somewhere at the other end of the room from nine till twelve o'clock.

There was profound pleasure to the man of letters in this intellectual interchange. Not but that he had met in the course of his varied experiences with cleverer women, but he had rarely met with a woman who seemed to think him so clever. The incense she offered him was far more delicate than any unmarried woman's could have been in his estimation. Mrs. Walsh had nothing to gain from him save the simple pleasure of his society. Whereas, after the manner of men, he believed that a name and ring are a sufficiently glorious recompense in the eyes of most girls to account for any amount of strivings to please. Without being a vain man, he was fully conscious of the fact of his being regarded as a man worth winning. On the whole, it certainly would not have been the fault of the married women of his acquaintance had he remained in ignorance of it.

It was a very pleasant evening. The French windows were open that led out into the gardens, and through them they could see the beds of scarlet geraniums looking black in the light of the stars. The sky was one sheet of deep intense blue spangled with gold, not a breath stirred the silent sweetness of the atmosphere. They rose up and went out and stood on the borders of the lawn, and—

“To-morrow night I shall be looking at it alone,” Mrs. Walsh said, after a pause.

“Unless you wake Ralph, and bring him out to pick up a new idea as to the cold light of stars.”

She smiled.

“He wouldn’t thank me for doing so,—he has an inveterate dislike both to new ideas, and to being woke up.”

“In that case pray don’t do it at my instigation ; but just compare your position to-morrow night with mine. You’ll not be minus one of the things that give you pleasure now ” (single-minded and little vain as he was, it gave him a sensation of pleasure to see the reproachful look she gave him when he said this), “while I shall be down in a house of death encountering all sorts of difficulties, such as contumacious wards.”

"She is not likely to be contumacious to you;—and how can you say that I shall not be minus a single pleasure that I have to-night. Have we treated you so badly that you are justified in declaring your society to be no pleasure to us?"

"You speak like a queen or a publisher," he said.

"I speak like a married woman—but answer my question, have we?"

"Have you what?"

"Treated you so badly?"

"Better than I deserve;—so well that I feel myself injured when I'm out of reach of the treatment, my goddess!"

"Perhaps we may as well go into tea now," Mrs. Walsh said, coolly; and perhaps it was as well that they did.

During the remainder of the evening there was little talk of anything save Goring Place, and what he would do with it. "I anticipate finding everything in a state of decay; the furniture was awfully old and rotten when I was there as a boy."

"Then you will have to refurnish;—delightful task."

"Unfortunately I have no mother or sisters to direct my tastes."

“As if you needed any one to direct your taste : but you forget, you will have *la belle* cousin—who will probably want everthing to be pink, and tied up with ribbon.”

“You must give me the benefit of your assistance in the matter. I will give up the reception-rooms to you, to do as you think proper with. Will you honour me so far ?”

“Indeed I will not,” she replied, laughing, “for your wife, when you have one, to find fault with everything ‘that’ Mrs. Walsh selected. I know what women are.”

“My wife, if ever I have one, will never allude in such a way to Mrs. Walsh.”

“How do you know that ?”

“Simply because I shall never permit her to do so.”

“As if you could stop a woman’s tongue.”

“You seem determined to endow a person who doesn’t exist with a marvellous amount of animus against yourself.”

“There will be nothing marvellous in the animus. Sisters, and friends who are almost like sisters, are generally hated with a holy hatred by young wives.”

“The projected young wife shall receive the

fullest assurance of your not being at all like a sister to me," he said, laughing.

Soon after this Mr. Walsh woke up, and began to take an interest, which he had been too sleepy to feel or feign earlier in the evening, in Walter's prospects. "Will it interfere with your going abroad with us this year?" he asked.

"When are you thinking of starting?"

"About the middle of August."

"Yes, that's rather late; if there's plenty of game I shall want to be at the Place in September."

"Why must we go abroad at all this year?" Mrs. Walsh asked.

"Why, indeed," Goring said. "Can't you put up with English country scenery for one autumn, Ralph? Come to Goring Place in the middle of August, and stay till the middle of next year if you can."

"It's a lovely country, isn't it?" Mrs. Walsh asked; and her husband shook his head, and laughed, as he replied,

"'Lovely' is not the epithet we usually apply to Norfolk, my dear."

"It has the beauty of superb cultivation," Walter Goring said; "a trifle flat, but capital colour, and

about Goring Place very well wooded. You wrong Norfolk if you imagine that you can find nothing worthy of painting in it."

"If you can induce my wife to give up Rome, where she has been bothering me to take her for the last six months, I'll agree to the change gladly."

"And I know the goddess will be gracious—won't she?" Walter Goring said humbly, half kneeling before her, and lifting her hand to his lips.

It was a sight which some husbands would not have liked to see; but Mr. Walsh was a remarkably sensible man. He knew—none better—that there was nothing in it—that it meant no harm. Therefore, he looked at the scene from the artistic point of view entirely, and admired it exceedingly. "Just keep as you are for a minute," he said, quickly taking out his note-book and pencil, "the situation is exactly what I wanted." When he had made a rapid sketch, he told them "that would do," and they both got up to look at the result of their posing.

"What is it, Ralph?" Walter asked.

"Mary Stuart and Chastelar."

"But I'm not a bit like Mary Stuart, Ralph."

"According to the estimate I have formed of her, she would have looked as you did then under the circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"The circumstances under which Chastelar always knelt at her feet—after he had 'put her out,' as you women call it—as a queen, and flattered her as a woman."

"Had I the look of being put out with Mr. Goring?" she asked, with a laugh. "I was only thinking whether Miss St. John would have looked as impertinently pleased as she did last night, if she could have seen him kneeling to me even in fun."

"Bother Miss St. John! I was in hopes I had heard the last of her!" Walter Goring said, shrugging his shoulders. And Mr. Walsh told him Horatia was determined that he shouldn't fall a victim for want of being put on his guard.

"Now, Ralph, I never paid him so poor a compliment as to fancy he would fall a victim to such a girl; why, her look of satisfaction last night was enough to provoke a saint." Mrs. Walsh said this with an air of putting it to them impartially. It

certainly was not a speech at all calculated to enhance the charm that might otherwise have been cast around the absent one. Walter Goring felt immediately that in truth there had been no fear of his falling a victim to such a girl. "But for all that," he thought, "I don't see why she shouldn't have shown satisfaction if she felt it; and she's too clever a girl to feel satisfaction in *any* fellow's attentions."

He was going to leave Roehampton for town early in the morning; so early that he could not in reason expect to see his hostess before he started, therefore he made his adieux when he was saying "good-night" to her.

"Good-bye, and God bless you!" she said, heartily. "Forget that foolish speech I made to-day, and remember this, that if I can serve you by befriending your uncle's daughter, I'll do it, whatever she may be. Will you remember this? and believe it?"

"Yes—thanks. You don't know what a weight you have lifted from my mind by the words. You are the only woman in the world who can help me. Good-bye, my goddess!"

"Good-bye, my foolish worshipper!" she said,

as she linked her arm within her husband's. "We would both do more than that for him, wouldn't we, Ralph?"

What do you say, reader? Was she his friend?

CHAPTER VI.

FEVERISH !

THE fever—the first signs of which had shown themselves on the night of the Walsh's dinner-party—turned out to be typhus of the worst sort. Poor little Ella was soon a mere crimson, tossing, moaning mass of pain and insensibility. The doctor shook his head, and looked graver than Mrs. Prescott had ever seen him look before, and recommended that the other children should be sent away somewhere ; and straw was laid down outside the house, and the door-knocker was tied up, and a great air of hush settled over the whole establishment.

Womanly woman, tender mother, as Mrs. Prescott was, she was not gifted with the nursing power. She sickened at sickness with an utterly uncontrollable sickening, against which it was use-

less to struggle. The sight of the feverish little cheeks, dearly as she loved them, brought an equally feverish hue of impatient dread into her own; and the heavy atmosphere of the darkened room, incapable as she was of keeping out of it, oppressed and caused her sensations of nausea. Accordingly, the task of tending upon the little child who was sick nearly unto death, devolved chiefly upon Charlie; and righteously Charlie fulfilled every atom of the task which was assigned to her by fate, and lightened by love.

Day and night were scarcely distinguishable from one another in that room; for the doctor belonged to that section of the old school, one of the articles of whose faith it is that disease flees before darkness. So thick green blinds were lowered before the open windows, and heavy curtains drawn across, and the balmy July air had the greatest difficulty in getting in at all to the room which was surcharged with heat and suffering.

The child's golden locks had been sacrificed as soon as the fever developed itself, and she looked "like a blushing convict," Charlie thought, as she was bending over the pillow, and striving to put the aching little head into a more comfortable posi-

tion one night. Suddenly, her hands faltered—failed in their task—and a great qualm seized her, and something began to beat at the back of her eyes. Tremblingly she seated herself on a chair by the bed-side, and strove to shake it off. She told herself that it was mere fatigue—mere giddiness, from bending so much, and for want of sleep—that she was as well as she had ever been in her life. She told herself all these things, pressing her hands against her face the while, as though she would have pressed the fever flush out of her cheeks, and the beating pain from behind her eye-balls. But it was no use. Presently, her hands fell down feebly into her lap ; her head restlessly sought a resting-place, and found it on the pillow by the side of little Ella's, and with a moaning sob over the misery of being ill in Robert Prescott's house, she passed into that state of half-slumber, half-delirium which marks the first stage of a fever.

Ella was tottering about—a transparent, wistful-looking thing—on very attenuated legs, before Charlie St. John came out of the unconsciousness into which she had lapsed with a moan that night. When she did so return, she heard, among other agreeable things, that all her hair had been cut off.

"Master wanted to have your head shaved, Miss ; but Mr. Frank wouldn't agree to it. But there ! I wasn't to tell you."

"Mr. *Frank*—is he ? ——" She stopped, with her heart beating fiercely. Her brother—the brother whom she scarcely knew—was home ; he would take her out of this house, which she hated ; he would redeem her from this ignominious bondage and slavery ; she was no longer friendless and alone. Her heart beat fiercely, but it was with hope and love and joy. Suddenly it sank again.

"Having made the slip of the tongue I may as well tell you all, Miss. I wasn't to speak of Mr. Frank having been home while you was at the worst, because he had to go again."

Charlie threw her arms up over her face, and the tears streamed from her eyes. She was not a crying woman ; but it was so hard to have this cup of joy dashed from her lips. Presently she composed herself sufficiently to ask—

"Gone ! where ? Gone for how long ?"

"Only to the coast of Ireland, Miss ; at any rate it's to one of the Channel Fleet that he's appointed, though I don't rightly know which. You'll see him again soon, Miss," the girl continued, sympa-

thetically. "Such a handsome young gentleman he is, and he did take on so about leaving you when you were so bad."

To which comforting assurance Charlie, while overpowered, as she was, with joy and weakness and surprise, could only reply by sobbing, "My brother ! my brother !" He was the one rock on which she had to rely, you see !—this brother, whom she had not seen for so many years, and who had come back, and, like a good angel, saved her head from being shaved while she was insensible !

When her first emotion had subsided a little, curiosity and vanity resumed their sway. She asked for her sister—and a looking-glass. It is difficult to decide which was the greatest shock to her—the tidings that Mrs. Prescott, together with her husband and children, were away at Brighton, or the first sight of herself with her hair cropped like a boy's.

"What an ugly little wretch I am !" she said, as the nurse came and took the glass away ; and she heaved a sigh that was not unnatural under the circumstances. Her hair had been a great glory to her, and she had been seen shorn of it by the only one in whose eyes she desired to look well just at

present—her brother. It was useless the nurse telling her that by-and-by, when she got well, she would look as “nicely as possible with it frizzed in a crop.”

“I know that I shall look like a nigger with it—frizzed in a crop.”

In course of time, as she grew stronger, and so able to listen to them, she heard some of the family arrangements, as detailed in letters from Ellen, which were to be opened and read by the nurse—an injunction the nurse religiously obeyed, and Charlie as irreligiously swore at in her heart. It irritated her through every fibre of her being to be read aloud to by any one at any time, and nurse’s treatment of Ellen’s sentences was an awful thing to endure. They were long letters too, that the affectionate sister wrote to the invalid; for the evenings at Brighton were dull, and pretty Mrs. Prescott had nothing to do but write them when her husband would not let her walk on the pier. She told Charlie what each one did, and said, and ate; and the nurse read it all with a plodding unction that frequently made Charlie long to smother her. A client of Robert’s—a Mr. Fellowes—was staying at Brighton with them, and he had his horses and trap

there, and constantly took them for long drives. According to Mrs. Prescott's account, driving about Brighton was a proceeding that bordered on madness. After each drive she described the horses as "nearly" having done something rash, not to say terrible. Cliffs and precipices, which they only just escaped, were scattered with profusion over her letters. "I don't know Mr. Fellowes, and I do know Ellen, so I'll give him the benefit of a doubt : anyone who didn't know her might distrust his Jehuship," Charlie thought to herself.

At last Charlie was well enough to read the letters for herself—then to answer them. Shortly after, the doctor wrote such a fair account of her to Brighton, that Mr. Prescott came up to see her, and to graciously announce his intention of taking her down to join her sister. Charlie "thought she would rather remain where she was ;" but the doctor declared change of air to be the only thing needed to complete her recovery. Accordingly, in September she was borne off to Brighton, and introduced to Mr. Fellowes.

They were introduced about two hours after her arrival. He came into the Prescotts' drawing-room in the evening, to ask if Mrs. Prescott would go

down and walk on the pier. Mrs. Prescott was not in the room when he entered; but a young lady, with a quantity of short curling hair, was lying on a sofa near the window, and little Ella was kneeling by her side. He was about to withdraw, with an abrupt apology, when the child ran after him and stopped him.

“Come in, and speak to my Aunt Charlie.”

He came up to the sofa then, the child still clinging about him. They were evidently good friends.

“May I be supposed to know you, Miss St. John, on this young lady’s introduction?”

“Certainly,” she said, holding out her hand to him. “My pet, don’t be troublesome to Mr. Fellows.”

“You know my name, too?”

“Yes; and your horses have played such an important part in Ellen’s letters that I shall not require an introduction to them either.”

“But I hope you will know them for yourself before we separate. Your sister is good enough to allow me to drive her out occasionally. You will be equally good, will you not?”

Before Charlie could reply, Mrs. Prescott came

into the room. "How d'ye do, Mr. Fellowes ? doesn't she look a poor wan thing ?"

"The sea air will soon set her up."

"Yes ; and if you'll transfer the offer you made me of a riding-horse to her, you don't know how much obliged I shall be to you."

"Ellen !" Charlie cried, reproachfully and quickly.

"Well, you ought to ride. The doctor says you're to ride, and Robert won't let you mount a Brighton hack."

"When she sees what a steady-going old fellow the Major is, she'll alter her mind, Mrs. Prescott," Mr. Fellowes said, rather patronisingly Charlie fancied. She thought "that great big man thinks I'm afraid ; I'd like to show him the difference."

In time to come—long after she had forgotten this idle thought of hers—she did show him the difference with a vengeance, poor man.

The husband and wife and their friend went out for a stroll shortly after this, and Charlie watched them from her position in the bay window until they were lost in the crowd on the pier. Even then she could frequently trace their progress by reason of Mr. Fellowes being at least a head taller than the majority of men. "What brings that big

robust man to Brighton, I wonder?" she thought, and presently she said aloud—

"Ella, pet, is Mr. Fellowes often here?"

"Yes; and he gives me such lots of fruit. I daresay he'll give you some now; but he'll give me most, because he loves me best."

"You'll give me some of yours, that will be the best way, eh?"

The child shook her head and pondered. The fruit question was a delicate one. In the pride of her heart little Ella had made a vaunt, and the vaunt was not based on sober fact. She had spoken of "lots of fruit," whereas in truth it was never more than she could eat with keen relish. She was not greedy, and she was very fond of Charlie. But she was only human. So now she shook her head and pondered.

"Perhaps he'll love you too and give you some, and then we shall both have enough," Ella suggested presently; then she added eagerly, "Pa wants him to like you, because I heard him say so. Look here, Aunt Charlie: he said, 'If Charlie only ——'"

"Hush, you dear little child," Charlie cried, laughing and stopping the child's mouth with a

kiss ; “ you pet monkey, you must never repeat things that you hear papa or anybody else say ; we’ll all have fruit enough, and like each other of course ; and now, childie, here comes nurse to take you to bed.”

But though she had checked the child, she had heard enough to make her feel sore and indignant. For the last day or two she had been feeling more kindly towards her brother-in-law ; she had been remembering more vividly that she did in truth owe him a very heavy debt of gratitude. He had been tender and considerate to her all the way down from town. He had expressed much pleasure at the prospect of having her at Brighton with them, and he had heartily congratulated her on the fever not having destroyed an atom of such good looks as had been hers previously to her illness. “ Upon my word, I think you look very well indeed with your hair short in this way, Charlie,” he had said to her ; “ though to be sure you look better with it long, in the old way ; but it will soon grow again.” This, and one or other things he had said to her, putting her in better conceit with her personal appearance than she had ever felt after speech of his before. Altogether

she had been feeling more kindly towards him, and now all such feeling was destroyed and broken up by the reflection that she had been had down to captivate the client who drove his horses nearly over the cliffs or into some other equally perilous position every day. As it grew dark, and she could get no further distraction by watching the gay crowds on the parade and pier, she became each moment more and more embittered. "Of course he doesn't care how he gets rid of me, or to whom," she muttered savagely. "Why should he? I shouldn't, were I in his place; only I never asked him to take me and provide for me. He wouldn't have done it if he hadn't wanted to get Ellen. And why should he? No man likes to marry a whole family. Oh dear! I wish I had died at my birth, or in the fever!—any fate, any life, any curse must be better than this life of mine, that I *can't* escape from, and that I can't blame any one for its being the unendurable thing it is!"

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPORARY OBLIVION.

IT will be seen that Charlie St. John had utterly forgotten the means of altering her life, or of making for herself an object in it, which Walter Goring had indicated to her. Whatever the cause, the fact remains. Whether it was that the fever had burnt the feelings which had so immediately preceded it out of her memory, or whether those feelings had been merely affected for the sake of making talk, cannot be decided yet. At any rate, they and the conversation which had grown out of them, and the hopes and ambitions which had been evolved by that conversation, had all faded away. Charlie St. John, lying there on the sofa in the bay window looking out over the dark sea which stretched before her, in September, was as hopeless of better things, as despairing as to her own

chances of ever getting out of the loathesome groove in which she was running, as oblivious of the fact of other women having battled against and surmounted worse difficulties than beset her path, as she had been in the Walshes' conservatory on that fair July evening. She had utterly forgotten that a voice which seemed to have a prophetic tone in it had said to her, "You will do something yet, if you try," and that she had replied, "I will try." The very memory of these things had passed from her. Whether they had died out never to spring up again remains to be seen.

By and by, she lying there wearily—so nearly asleep that it was not worth while to wake up and pretend to be glad to see them—heard them come in. They said "Hush!" at first; at least Ellen said, "Hush! Charlie's asleep," and forthwith fell to talking rather louder than either of the others. Then she heard the question of claret-cup raised, and there was a brief dispute as to the best manner of making it, which was finally settled by their "agreeing to leave it to the waiter." After that they discussed the important question of what they should do the following day. "Take your sister

up and show her the Devil's Dyke," Mr. Fellowes suggested.

"Yes, if she's well enough to ride she can go up on horseback," Mr. Prescott replied; "Charlie's a capital horse-woman."

Charlie, half asleep as she was, heard this, and winced and smarted. Her brother-in-law seemed to be throwing her at this man's head. She had an almost unconquerable desire to rise up and say to them, "I hear everything, and I know everything, and I won't forward your game; do what you please with me." But reason told her some hard truths, and saved her from making such a futile exhibition of herself.

After a while they roused her, and Mr. Prescott came and busied himself about her sofa cushions and the shawl that was spread over her. He said one or two kind little things to her and of her, things of which she couldn't take hold, but which she felt were intended to put her in the best light before the guest, and the guest regarded her with eyes that told her that she stood in a very pleasant light for him already. Attention from Robert Prescott! Attempts to enhance her value from Robert Prescott! It was all too ridiculous, too

mean and small and paltry. She could not play "such a wretched part in such a wretched farce." Thinking this, she rose impatiently, saying, "I shall go to bed, Ellen;" but even as she spoke she faltered, tottered, and fell back upon the couch. They all crowded round her, as people do when they believe a person to be faint, effectually precluding all chance of the poor wretch's speedy recovery, and determinately keeping out every reviving breath of air. However, Charlie was not faint; she was only weak and exhausted, so it did not so much matter.

"I'll carry you up to your room, my dear," Mr. Prescott said, and Charlie, exhausted and angry as she was, burst out laughing. Mr. Prescott's little rounded back, and Mr. Prescott's altogether insignificant form, looked so very unlike "carrying" with anything like safety, much less comfort to the carried.

"No, thank you, Robert, I would rather walk; I shall be all right directly. I suppose it's the sea air that has taken me off my legs in this way," she said, as soon as she could check her laughter.

Mr. Fellowes had been standing at the head of the sofa with a bottle of cruelly strong smelling

salts in his hand. He now came round to the side, and before she knew what he was going to do, he had bent down and lifted her up in his arms. Feeling rather small and very helpless, there she remained perfectly quiescent; and when he said, "If you'll show me her room, Mrs. Prescott, I will carry her to it," she uttered no word of protest. So he carried her to her room and deposited her there, and bade her good night briefly before she could thank him. When he was gone, Mrs. Prescott commenced eagerly—

"What do you think of him, Charlie?"

"I think he's a big brute," Charlie replied.

"How can you say so, after he has been so kind?"

"My dear Ellen, I could have walked."

"You didn't seem to manage the walking very well," Mrs. Prescott remarked with some truth.

"I should have done better next time."

"He looked so handsome as he brought you up the stairs; it was quite like a scene in a play."

Charlie laughed. "From my point of view he looked like a curled and oiled Assyrian bull. I never saw anything so regular and crispy and tight

in my life out of the British Museum as those curls of his are. Where did Robert and you pick him up?"

"He's a gentleman of large property in Norfolk; he's not to be picked up by any one, I assure you, Charlie," Ellen replied rather tartly; "and oh! dear Charlie, if you should come to like him, it would be such a match for you."

"Good night, dear," Charlie said abruptly, turning round and burying her face out of her sister's sight on the pillow; and Mrs. Prescott, fearing that she had done more harm than good by her little suggestion, went away out of the room meekly and dejectedly.

The record of the days as they passed at Brighton during that September is scarcely worth telling. Charlie St. John gradually gained strength, and gradually gained something else too,—a hearty grateful liking for the honest-hearted gentleman whom she had dubbed "a big brute" on the night of her arrival. He was one of those men who are always gentle and tender to anything that is physically weak. He pitied Miss St. John so much for having been ill. He strove so very earnestly to think of little jaunts into the country that might amuse her,

and he was so careful to avoid rucks and other causes of jolting in driving, that she could but be grateful to him. Nevertheless, she laughed at him to her sister. "He either thinks me utterly decayed and dreads seeing me crumble to pieces at the first shock, or the females of his own house must be perfect grenadiers," she would say to Ellen; and Ellen would with difficulty obey her husband's injunction "not to interfere" at such moments, and hold her tongue sorely against her will. But though Charlie laughed at him, she was always glad to see him; and he marked her gladness, and drew favourable deductions from it, not knowing that he owed the favour, such as it was, to that dangerous love of novelty which was at once her charm and her curse.

However, he was ignorant of this, and in his ignorance he experienced very blissful feelings. The wealthy country gentleman had led a very hum-drum life. He had seen very little of women out of his own rather narrow circle; he had been very little out of the neighbourhood where his fathers had been born, and married, and buried. Charlie came upon him like a revelation. She interested him; he did not understand her, and

after the manner of his kind, he liked a thing in exact proportion as it appeared incomprehensible to him. He liked to watch her and telegraph his "wonder" to Mrs. Prescott, as to "what she would be at next;" and Charlie observed this and ridiculed him to herself and to her sister, who was still obedient to her lord's command, that there should be no interference in the matter.

"He looks as if he expected me to stand on my head," Charlie would say, and Ellen would humbly urge in extenuation of these looks of his, "perhaps he admires you, Charlie."

"No, no! it's not admiration, it's the hope of seeing me do something odd; perhaps he thinks I have been mad, as my hair is cut short. If I thought it was really that, I'd dance at him, and pretend I was going to bite him."

But though she said this often to her sister, always freshly inciting the gentle Ellen's terrors that she would in truth carry her threat into execution, she never did it, and moreover, never intended to do it. The watching was an odious thing, and a hard one to bear, and it was rendered harder by being watched in turn by the Prescotts. But she had no wish to put a stop to it in such a way as

should cause Mr. Fellowes to cease from the watch for ever.

One evening, when Charlie had been at Brighton about three weeks, Mr. Fellowes came in to ask her if she would go "for a last ride with him."

"Are you going away?" Charlie asked, opening her eyes wide with surprise. The man had become very necessary to her—he and his good old brown horse the 'Major.' She did not like the idea of being left entirely to herself and the Prescotts again.

He looked down at her very gently, and asked—"Are you sorry that I am going?"

"Uncommonly!" Charlie replied, in a tone that robbed both question and answer of anything like sentiment. Mr. Fellowes had fallen into an unpleasant habit of making similar speeches to the one just recorded aloud before the Prescotts, and the keen look which they invariably called into being in Mr. Prescott's eyes, goaded Miss St. John almost to madness. "Uncommonly sorry to lose the old horse too, Mr. Fellowes; at all events I will have as much as I can of him to-night, so I'll go and put on my habit at once."

When she was gone out of the room, Mrs. Prescott asked, "Must you really go to-morrow?"

"Yes, I think I had better," he replied. "I'm wanted at home, and I'm doing no good here."

"You may be wanted at home, but I'm sure you are wrong about doing no good here; how poor Charlie will miss you," Mrs. Prescott said with a little sigh. The poor woman, meek and long-suffering and lymphatic as she was, did suffer many things about Charlie, of which Charlie had no conception. The list of Charlie's sins and offences against order and discretion and conventionality was a long one as made out by Mr. Prescott, and he was constantly unrolling it before his wife's eyes, and delivering a running commentary upon it. She had been hoping fervently for the last week that it was complete, or rather that Charlie was going to obliterate this scroll of shame by marrying Mr. Fellowes. Now it appeared as if Mr. Fellowes was not going to give her the chance. However it might be about his loving, it was clear according to his own statement, that he was going to ride away. No wonder that she sighed as she thought of how her husband would growl, and said "How poor Charlie will miss you."

“Do you mean that?” he asked eagerly. He was a man of nine and twenty or thirty, but his face flushed like a boy’s, and his big frame trembled with agitation as he asked it.

“Yes,” Mrs. Prescott said hesitatingly. She was awfully afraid of Mr. Prescott declaring this speech of hers to come under the head of that interference which he had prohibited, and though he was not there to hear her, she knew herself too well to doubt but that she should repeat every word to him when he came in. So she said her “Yes” so hesitatingly, that Mr. Fellowes thought she did not mean it.

“Now look here, Mrs. Prescott,” he began, and Mrs. Prescott could have taken her oath that his round honest blue eyes were suffused with tears as he spoke. “It’s a great deal to me whether you mean what you say or not. I never saw a girl on whose truth I’d sooner stake my life, or what’s more, my honour, than on hers; she seems to like me, but I may be mistaken, and if I am I shall carry the marks of it longer than most men perhaps; *did* you mean all your words implied, coming as they did from her sister, when you said ‘Poor Charlie will miss you?’”

He spoke very seriously, and Mrs. Prescott was too much agitated to answer him at once; it arose principally from feeling that she was in for it now, and that it was hopeless to endeavour to extricate herself. She was in for that interference against which her husband had cautioned her with something like a snarl; there was no escape for her.

Happily for her, before she could speak, and so convict herself still further, Charlie came back robed for her ride. Mrs. Prescott said a little thanksgiving on the spot. Providence had befriended her, and made Charlie's habit to button easily that evening.

They went out together, Miss St. John and Mr. Fellowes, and Mrs. Prescott watched them from the window, and saw him lift her to the saddle the instant her foot touched his hand. "Oh dear," Ellen thought, I hope they will be engaged when they come back; there's no reason why she shouldn't marry him. I don't believe she cares for anybody else, and he is so tall and nice."

Meanwhile the pair she was thinking about were cantering along the road to Hove, and Charlie was glancing askance now and again at her unusually

silent cavalier, and feeling very sure of something being said that would in some way materially alter their relations to one another before they cantered home again.

Her woman's wit told her that it would be well to defer the inevitable something that was to come, until their ride was nearly over; then perhaps it would be just as well to hear it. She told herself that she was very glad, and proud and happy that it should have come to this—that he should have got to like her so well in such a short time, as to be now brimming over with impatience to tell her of it. Nevertheless, as she looked at him, when they pulled up to walk their horses down a hill on the Shoreham road—when she looked at him and saw clearly how the liking in his eyes was deepening into love that would not remain long unspoken, she felt a qualm at her heart, and a tightening in her throat. She had never felt so before in any of those innocent flirtations for which she had been so reviled by Robert Prescott. All the gaiety fled from her brow and eyes, all the lightness from the hand that had been playing so delicately with the curb, all the warmth seemed to her to die out of the bright September air as she thought, "This

is going to be a very different—a very serious thing: shall I be able to stand it?” She had not much time to reflect on the question she had asked herself; when they reached the level he drew his horse a little nearer to hers, and laying his hand on the pommel, he commenced at once.

“I asked you last night, when we were on the pier, if you would let me call you Charlie, and you said ‘Yes’; do you know all that concession meant to me?”

She was nervous enough in reality, but it was part of her character to strive to seem most blythe and careless when in truth she was most wrought upon. So now she said—

“It meant two shillings. I said ‘Yes, if you’ll give the German band something, and make them play my pet waltzes’; and you gave them two shillings, for I saw you.”

“It meant more than that, Charlie.”

She laughed. “So it did; it meant that we are such capital friends, that you might call me anything—anything that is not Charlotte; calling me Charlotte is Mr. Prescott’s pet punishment for me when my sins and offences have been too heavy for him to bear.”

He moved his hand from the pummel now, and laid it upon her wrist.

“It meant either that you were making a play-thing of me Charlie, or that I might go on loving you as I do—as I have, my darling, almost from the first day of my seeing you.”

Her lips parted, and she looked from side to side with the startled gaze of a hunted animal. She was in the toils ; and she could not decide whether she should escape from them while there was yet time, or not ?

CHAPTER VIII.

DAISY !

WALTER GORING found his late uncle's lawyer, Mr. Clarke, a loquacious, big, black-whiskered, effusive-mannered man, instead of the cut-and-dried epitome of reticence and quiet keen-sightedness which he had anticipated. The young *littérateur* had had little to do with law and lawyers heretofore. True he had once or twice made threatening mention of "my solicitor" in letters to refractory publishers who were very naturally trying to make out of him precisely what he was trying to make out of them, namely, the most that might be made. But in the flesh, all the knowledge he had of the gentlemen of the long robe had been gained at the various wine parties he had attended in the "Temple," festivities which were given by men who had limited their exertions at the Bar to eating the dinners.

Mr. Clarke was no bad travelling companion for a man who had just come into possession of a property of which he knew nothing. From the moment they stepped into the carriage at Shoreditch, till they stepped out of it again at the Goring Place platform, the lawyer poured out one fluent continuous stream of valuable information connected with the estate and affairs of the late Gilbert Goring, Esq. There was only one subject on which he held his tongue ; and that was the sealed letter, the secret trust confided to his care by the deceased, to be delivered by him (Mr. Clarke) into the hands of the new master of Goring Place immediately after the reading of the will of the old one.

Walter Goring had tasted blood now. Two days before, and he had been as indifferent about Fortune as a man tolerably sure of being able to win her for himself alone can be. He had the certain conviction that he had it in him to make himself "famous by his pen," and he had been careless of any extraneous aid. From his boyhood he had known that, in the order of things, when his uncle died, he would inherit a large property ; but he never suffered himself to count upon it. He had always remembered three things—firstly, that the property was not entailed,

and could therefore be left to any one who seemed more deserving of it in his uncle's eyes than he himself. Secondly, that Gilbert Goring might marry and have a son of his own; and thirdly, that the country gentleman, who came of a long-lived line, and who had never taken it out of himself, either mentally or physically, as Walter felt that *he* had, might last the longer of the two. These considerations had kept him from giving much thought to the Norfolk property which might or might not be his in time to come. But as is often the case, his philosophy of indifference broke down when most it was needed. He read the first portion of the lawyer's letter and tasted blood, that is to say, he suffered himself to feel that he was a landed proprietor and a county man.

He read the after portion, and learnt that there was an after-thought of his uncle's still to be made known to him—a sealed letter still to be read, containing Gilbert Goring's latest intentions—containing, perchance, some fell blow to his being either of the things which, as he was but human, his heart had proudly swelled with the consciousness of being for a few brief seconds.

He had tasted blood and he could not go back to

the old indifference, but after one solitary attempt, which Mr. Clarke baffled, Walter sought to gain no clue as to what the contents of that letter might be. At the first mention of it which the young master of Goring Place made, the lawyer lapsed into a taciturnity which contrasted curiously with his previously almost jovial manner. His sallow pale face hardened, and his big black whiskers stiffened themselves portentously, and he was almost offensively business-like, as he said,

“Professional matters must take their course, Mr. Goring. I can make every allowance for your impatience, but I cannot gratify it.”

Walter did not like the way Mr. Clarke said it, or the way in which Mr. Clarke pressed his lips together after saying it; moreover, it was offensive to his taste that he should have been reproved for impatience by a man whom in his heart he denominated “a howling cad” the instant he saw him. He took no notice of the rebuke, however, but looked out of the window, and whistled a few bars of a waltz in which he was rather fond of revolving with Horatia Walsh—his grand “goddess,” who danced as well as she did most other things that specially called for stateliness and grace.

His whistling was soon interrupted. Mr. Clarke had as little inclination to hold his tongue, apparently, as he had to be unprofessional. The lawyer only intended to talk about safe things, but evidently he intended to talk a great deal about them. He began by extolling the admirable manner in which the tenants on the Goring Place Estate farmed the land. "Greyling's lease expires at Michaelmas," he continued, "but if I were in your place, I should renew it for him."

"Who is Greyling? and what does he hire?"

"The home farm—about six hundred acres."

"If I settle down at the place, I shall keep the home farm in my own hands, in order to have something to do," Walter replied. Mr. Clarke's advocacy of Greyling was not made at a propitious moment.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Have you ever learnt farming?" he asked.

"No."

"Then in that case you will find yourself rather behind the Norfolk men, Mr. Goring; all the land is most excellently let at present, let to men who are steadily increasing the value of your property. I can conceive nothing more injudicious than your

trying your hand at amateur farming; of course I only speak as a man of business."

"It's more than probable that I shall not settle there; but in the event of my doing so, I shall want some occupation. How about the society in the neighbourhood?"

Mr. Clarke assumed a judicial air: the truth was, that he knew nothing of the society in the neighbourhood. The late Gilbert Goring had kept his man of business strictly in his place as a man of business. There had always been a bed-room and a horse at Mr. Clarke's disposal at Goring Place. But Mr. Goring assumed that his county neighbours were no more desirous of meeting his lawyer on terms of equality, than he was of meeting theirs. Accordingly he never asked them, and so it came to pass that Mr. Clarke's knowledge of the neighbourhood was but limited. However, he had no intention of making this fact too patent to his new client. So, in answer to the latter's question, "How about society in the neighbourhood?" he looked judicial, and then replied,

"Oh! very good—good, you know; but dull, excepting just in the hunting season."

"I have not been there since I was a boy.

Whose are the places immediately around Goring Place?"

This was safe ground. Mr. Clarke knew well by whom each inch of soil for many miles around Goring Place was owned and occupied; he answered briskly:

"Lord Harrocoat's estate lies to the north of Goring Place. Tremendous property, that!—tremendous! some of the finest farms in the county! I assure you his tenants go to pay their rent in carriages that would take the shine out of many a one that we see in the drive in the season: there is a tradition that one of them used to drive a four-in-hand of the best bred and matched bays in the county; but Lady Harrocoat had hysterics about it, so he has an attack of ague now every audit-day, and sends the rent by his bailiff."

"I have a faint recollection of the gable of a red house that I used to see through the trees when I was standing at one of the drawing-room windows!"

"I suppose that was the south lodge."

"Oh! no; it was beyond the grounds—far beyond, I should say!"

"Ah! to be sure, Fellowes's place, 'The Hurst': it's a small estate that belongs to a man of the

name of Fellowes, and it does lie to the south of Goring Place. The lands meet, and there was an awful row some years ago, between your uncle and old Fellowes, the father of this man, about a right of way. There was a sort of private road, that led from The Hurst to the church at Deneham, and it cut across a piece of your land; suddenly your uncle blocked it up and made no end of ill feeling about it."

"What did he do it for?"

"Oh! some magisterial quarrel. Old Fellowes and he were both on the bench, and they disagreed about some poaching business. I forget what it was, but at any rate your uncle got worsted in the matter, so he went and set about annoying Fellowes in return in the only way that seemed open to him, by blocking-up the lane where it ran into his land; foolish thing to do."

"Very," Walter replied. Then he went on to ask, "Have you ever seen my——his daughter?"

Mr. Clarke broke into a laugh: "I have been waiting for you to ask me that question before; seen her! I have, indeed; and I am not likely to forget the interview!"

"Why so?" Walter Goring asked.

“It was a foolish business, *that* too,” Mr. Clarke said, rapidly, without answering Walter’s question ; “a very foolishly mistaken chivalric piece of business as ever I heard of; I went, at your late uncle’s request, before the girl had got accustomed to her home or her father, and I never heard a young lady pour out home truths with more vicious emphasis in my life.”

“What about ? what did she say ?”

“Her words rattled out like hailstones ; and as I moved in the dark, being utterly ignorant of what had gone before, I could not connect them ; but she actually cowed her father with her reproaches about her own birth and her mother, as I understood her.”

“When was this ?” Walter asked, hoping that it was long ago, and that time had tamed her.

“When she first came to Goring Place, six months since ; she’s a peculiar-looking girl—a great deal of suppressed power in her face, and a wonderful way of appearing to cool down suddenly after a burst of excitement. I believe it’s only in appearance, and that she’s a deceitful little devil.”

“Pleasant prospect for me, as I am her guardian.”

“Worse for the man who may possibly be her

husband," the lawyer replied, laughing. "Your's is the lesser evil, and the pleasanter position of the two."

"What is her name?"

"Miss Goring, of course, now."

"Her other name—her Christian name—what's that?"

"Daisy, your uncle called her; her name is Marguerite."

"Doesn't sound very appropriate; you say she isn't pretty?"

"Not at all—not at all!" Mr. Clarke replied, decisively. "Yet, as I tell you, there is a look in her face that you don't forget in a hurry; she makes you think about her, whether you admire her or not."

"And her manners—her education?—where and how has she been brought up?"

"There's a mystery about it; I tried to find out, both from your uncle, and from her: your uncle just put the question aside, and *she* flared up at me in a way that was a caution to me not to trouble her with too many of my remarks during the remainder of my visit. What her education may be I cannot tell, for she has those manners which

leave you in doubt as to whether she knows nothing and thinks of nothing, or whether she knows a great deal and thinks more. She has one charm—a voice like a bird. I'm not judge enough of music to know whether it's cultivated or not; but it's fresh and sweet to an extraordinary degree."

"She'll be rather an interesting charge, even if she is a perplexing one," Walter Goring said, in rather more hopeful tones than he had used about her before.

"I hope you may find her so," his lawyer replied, drily; and then the talk about Daisy dropped, and they began to speak about how well the game had been preserved on the Goring Place estate, and other topics of the like sort which are naturally dear to the heart of a possessor.

It was past twenty minutes to eight when the train stopped for the two gentlemen to get out at the Goring Place platform. Round the corner of the station a groom was waiting with a horse and dog-cart; a groom who looked very sheepish, and wished from the bottom of his heart that he had dressed himself more tidily when Mr. Clarke said to him—"This is Mr. Goring, your new master, John." Then he turned to Walter, and said half-

apologetically—"You must not mind in what sort of state you find things at Goring Place, Mr. Goring ; the fact is, I didn't telegraph your intention of coming down to the poor confused creatures ; we'll soon have things in better order after the funeral."

"A dinner and a bed is all I shall care to have to-night," Walter replied.

"You'll have an interview with *la belle* cousin, will you not ?"

"Yes, certainly, if she will permit it."

"You are her guardian, remember ; her permission will be a thing of course."

Walter laughed. "I have never been in command before ; but if I know myself, I am not likely to try it on any woman, much less on this poor girl."

The Goring Place railway platform was situated close to one of the entrances into the little park, in the centre of which the house stood. A rapid drive along an avenue of elms brought them into the chief approach to the house, which with its darkened windows fronted them mournfully in the clear bright light of the July evening.

"You *are* a fine old place," Walter said admiringly.

“Yes; a man would do many things rather than forfeit it, Mr. Goring?”

“Yes,” Walter replied, abstractedly.

It was a fine old place. It stood facing the south against a background of abruptly rising, well-wooded hill. A long, grey-stone mansion, lofty too, though only two stories high. An old mansion, with a grand Gothic arched entrance porch, and a row of ecclesiastical-looking windows on either side, that caused one to feel oneself in church at the first glimpse, but to which one got accustomed, and felt grand about after a while. The Gothic arch was a bit of the original building; but the groined ceilings, and the mullioned windows had been added by the father of the late Gilbert Goring, and antiquarians averred that they were not in “keeping” with other “bits” of the house. However that might be, they were quite in keeping with beauty.

Down in a hollow at the left of the house a lake shimmered beautifully bright through the foliage that intervened; and two or three swans floated tranquilly upon it, and two or three little islets, covered with rhododendrons in full bloom, broke its silver purity with their gorgeous colours. To the right the view was interrupted by a mass of high

flowering shrubs, by cypresses and the arbutos, and the evergreen oak, and the Spanish laurel, and the other trees which are usually employed to shut off all the stables and the kitchen gardens from the front of a house.

They went through the genuine old arch into the hall, where a lot of armour and antlers were hanging about, and the news that the new master had come spread like wildfire. Before Walter could get into the dining-room the housekeeper was at his heels offering him dinner and apologies, and interesting little details of his uncle's last words and illness, in a breath. The other servants, with the exception of the butler, who commenced laying a most elaborate cloth, kept out in the hall, and peered at Mr. Goring through the key-hole and the crevices by the hinges. Each individual in the house came forward to look at the new master of it, save she who was left to his guardianship—his young cousin, Daisy.

“While I am at dinner you will let Miss Goring know that I should like to see her in the course of the evening, if you please, Mrs. Mason.” Then he feared that this sounded too authoritative, and he added, “that is if it is agreeable to her to see me.”

The housekeeper smiled meaningly.

"I will tell her what you say, sir," she replied. Then she went away out of the room, leaving the two men to the undisturbed enjoyment of that repast which had been provided for Mr. Clarke alone.

"Queer feeling it gives a fellow being in the house with a dead body," Walter said after a little time; "perhaps it is because I have never been brought so close to death before; but I own to having a sort of weight upon me that isn't regret for my uncle. I should be a hypocrite to affect that, for I knew nothing of him."

"I wonder what feeling kept Miss Goring secluded when she heard of your arrival?" Mr. Clarke replied.

"What feeling! why, decent feeling, of course; I should not have thought the better of her if she had come tearing forward to spy at a stranger while her father's corpse was lying unburied in the house. I am not sure that I have done right in asking to see her to night at all."

The lawyer laughed. "My dear sir," he said presently, "don't go to a meeting with Miss Goring with any of these notions."

"Why not?" Walter asked, somewhat angrily.

"Why not! because the way in which she may fall short of them may disgust you with her; we are all too apt to be indignant when unconscious ones fall short of the ideal we have formed of them."

"On my soul it's not your fault if the ideal I have formed of my cousin is the reverse of exalted," Walter replied; to which Mr. Clarke hastily answered, "Banish any impression I may have given you unwittingly; banish it, and judge her for yourself."

The dinner had been long cleared away, the dessert had been placed on the tables, the wine had decreased in the bottles, and lamp-light had succeeded twilight, and still there came no word of recognition from Miss Goring. Finally Walter rang the bell, and re-summoned Mrs. Mason. When she came, he asked her—

"Does Miss Goring know I'm here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she send any message to me?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't she say anything?" he urged.

"She said, 'I suppose he'll do as he likes,' when I told her what you said."

“Then I shall like to see her at once,” he said haughtily, as he saw Mr. Clarke struggling to suppress a smile; perhaps you’ll be good enough to take me to her, Mrs. Mason.” And Mrs. Mason said, “Certainly, sir,” and led the way across the hall, and up the old winding oak staircase to the door of a room at the end of a corridor which was thickly hung with dead and gone Gorings. At this door the housekeeper paused to knock, and Walter arrested her intention. A clear, sweet, powerful soprano voice was exercising itself in apparently unrestrained joyousness in the “Shadow Song” from “Dinorah.”

“God in Heaven,” he muttered, “what can this girl be made of to be singing in this way, while her father lies unburied in the house!” And the housekeeper shook her head, and whispered in reply—

“The young lady’s very hard to judge, sir,—very hard to judge.”

As soon as the song ceased he knocked a loud determined knock, and got for answer, “Come in, do!” sharply uttered. Opening the door, he looked into a small sitting-room, at the far end of which, at a grand piano, a girl was sitting with her back to him. In the moment that he had to look at her,

he saw only a slight, graceful girlish back and shoulders, clothed in well-fitting black silk, and a small head, with yellow hair braided closely about it. The next moment she had risen, and was advancing towards him, saying with most wonderful self-possession—

“Mr. Goring, I presume? won’t you be seated?” then she looked round at the housekeeper, and added, “and *you* can go, Mrs. Mason, and shut the door behind you.”

The housekeeper turned out of the room, and banged the door as bidden; and Miss Goring seated herself on a low chair, leaving her cousin still standing looking down upon her.

The face upon which he looked down had been rightly described by Mr. Clarke as one that was “full of suppressed power.” It was a fair-complexioned, rather freckled face. The jaw was a trifle squarer than we are accustomed to find well in a woman; and though the chin could not have been called either heavy or prominent, it was very far from retreating, or lacking firmness. The mouth was rather wide, and the full, well-formed lips were intensely sensitive—he saw them quivering now as he looked at her for all the self-possession

she was displaying. Her brow was wide and low, and over its delicate surface the blue veins could be distinctly traced. Her eyes were cobalt blue, and her little straight nose had an upward tendency; and both eyes and nose were strongly marked with about the most impertinent expression it had ever been his lot to witness in any woman's face. Withal it was not a pretty face, but it was a very remarkable one.

"This won't do, you know!" Walter Goring exclaimed, after a few moment's pause, going nearer to her, and putting out his hand.

She slid her own into his, and was going to slide it out again, when he pressed and retained it.

"Are you annoyed with me for wanting to see you to-night?" he asked, seriously.

"Not a bit! why to-night more than any other night?" she replied, indifferently. She made no further effort to release her hand, but it lay in his, cold and chilly, like a little snake.

"I thought perhaps that it might be unpleasant to you to see strangers just yet; but I reflected that we mustn't be strangers, that we're almost like brother and sister, and therefore I came."

Other women had found this man's smile very

sweet, and he gave her his sweetest smile now, as he stood holding her hand and looking down upon her. But she remained absolutely unmoved by it.

“Why shouldn’t I have liked to see strangers yet?”

“I hardly know.” He was getting discomfited.

“Why didn’t you hardly know?” she asked, laughing.

“I fancied that perhaps it was too soon after your father’s death for you to care to see one whom you didn’t know yet.”

She wrung her hand out of his suddenly.

“Too soon after Mr. Goring’s death! don’t begin canting to me. I had a dose of that from Mr. Travers the clergyman, and then from old Mason. I know that I’m left to you to feed, and clothe, and look after, for Mr. Goring told me so; but I’m not going to pretend to please you by saying now that I’m sorry for the death of a man I never loved while he was alive.”

He drew a chair close up in front of hers, and sat down upon it. He thought that she was treating him to a little bit of foolish, girlish acting; and who can tell whether he was right or not in his judgment? At any rate he had had enough of

it. So he commenced somewhat sternly and suddenly :

“Now look here, Daisy, you and I had better understand one another at once. I don’t expect you to try to please me—yet—nor do I desire you to feign what you don’t feel; but I am your guardian; and for your own credit’s sake, child, I insist upon this, that you make respectful mention of your father, or that you do not mention him at all.”

She looked him straight in the face while he was speaking; the little fair face, and the simply arranged yellow hair looked irresistibly young and innocent. The eyes, too, were not so impertinent as they had been a minute before. Altogether he felt sorry for having spoken so crossly, not that, but so sternly to this little creature, who was so entirely in his power.

“Do you hear me, and heed me, Daisy?” he asked, softly; and then she threw her head back, and laughed her pealing laugh for a moment or two, and then sang—

“In all else I will obey,
But in this I must be free.”

And he rose up and turned away from her more

disgusted and surprised than he had ever been at a woman's conduct before.

"For God's sake," he exclaimed, "remember that he was your father."

"He forgot the fact for seventeen years," she replied, quickly.

"How do you know that he forgot it?"

"How do I know it!" the girl repeated mockingly; "how do I know that my mother—my darling mother—was borne down by her shame, and her fear, and her anger at it."

"Is your mother alive still?" he interrupted hastily.

"Do you know anything about her?" the girl cried.

"Nothing, nothing."

"Then you will not hear anything from me," she said with a sudden reassumption of coolness. "Yes, you shall hear this much. I've seen my mother nearly mad with remorse, and I have heard myself twitted, and taunted, and reviled with what was quite as much that man's sin as my mother's—the pretty creature. I hated him for it, and I never forgave him for it while he was alive, and I don't see that I'm called upon to do it now he is dead. Mr. Travers came and talked to me about

his 'being the author of my being' the day he died, hoping to make this unregenerate sinner weep; but I couldn't do it, and so I didn't do it; and because I told the truth about it, old Travers, like a truly Christian pastor, was much shocked; but *you'll* be friends with me, won't you?" she continued, suddenly going up to him and placing her hand on his as it rested on the back of the chair he had formerly occupied.

"Yes, I will; and you in turn will oblige me, perhaps, in one thing?"

"What is it?"

"Keep quiet for a few days. I judged you very hardly when I came to the door just now, and you offended my taste by breaking out in the way you did when I was talking to you."

"You don't like my singing?"

"Your singing is glorious—only just now it's unseemly."

"Perhaps it won't offend your taste if I tell you that if you were to die now I shouldn't feel inclined to outrage decorum by singing. Won't you sit down and talk to me?"

"Not to-night; Mr. Clarke is down below, and I must go and talk to him."

“I talked to him once,” she said with a laugh.

He remembered Clarke’s words, and asked,
“What did you say?”

“I believe I reminded him that the rest of the servants held their tongues when their master and mistress were talking. He was in a fearful rage, and” (her face blanched, and sparks of fire flashed from her eyes) “reminded me of what *I* was. I went and told Mr. Goring, and Mr. Goring didn’t hound him from the house, or break his neck. What would *you* have done?”

“I hardly know—which,” he replied; and as he said it the girl exclaimed warmly,—

“I’ll keep quiet for a few days, cousin Walter, and you’ll come and see me again to-morrow, won’t you?”

He promised her that he would do so, and then left her, thinking as he walked along the corridor and down the stairs to rejoin Clarke, “This Daisy of mine will keep my hands employed. I wonder how she will hit it off with Mrs. Walsh; she’s rather affected and rather designing, at the same time she is neither ill-mannered nor ill-minded; whatever her experiences of life, they have not been gained amongst vulgar or illiterate people. I won’t

force her confidence, but I think in time that she will tell me where and with whom her life has been passed ; it will be essential to her happiness that I should know, in order that I may guard her from contact with what will pain her ; and essential to my own, too, for I fancy that I shall get to be as fond of her as a sister. I hope my goddess won't be high and mighty, after her ordinary dear imperial manner with the poor loveable child."

Then he joined Clarke, and they went out together and walked about on the lawn, and smoked their cigars. Ever and anon Walter's eyes fell upon the grand old mass of building in the foreground, and he experienced pleasurable sensations of ownership. Through his pen he had won for himself a name that sounded already. But he had never had a "local habitation" before ; and now he had such a fair one ! Small wonder that his bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne, despite that uncertainty still existing about the sealed letter containing old Gilbert Goring's latest desires.

CHAPTER IX.

A WAYWARD WARD.

THE funeral was over. Decently and in order—or rather pompously and ceremoniously as became his position in the county—had Gilbert Goring, Esq., of Goring Place, been laid with his fathers. The neighbouring gentlemen sent their carriages with the windows closed, and one or two of them even attended in person. For “Old Goring” had been much respected, as the phrase is; though one or two, whose own sins had not found them out yet, did shake their heads about the daughter who came to their knowledge grown up, and without an apparent or mentionable mother.

But riches, like charity, cover a multitude of sins. It was only those, after all, who were not asked, who had of late not dined at Goring Place; and now it was only those who had remained igno-

rant of the day who stayed away from the funeral, or omitted to pay some mark of respect to the old man on his road to his long home. In all that county side there was only one who thought about old Gilbert Goring at all who did not wish "peace to his soul," and that one was his daughter.

She attended to her cousin's injunctions, and kept very quiet through the whole of the day. In common with the rest of the household, she had been present when the will was read in the presence of the heir and a few neighbours, to whom were left trifling legacies, such as rings, racing cups, &c. She had listened coldly and composedly, and had betrayed neither surprise nor annoyance when she found that the whole property was left to her cousin, Walter Goring. But her cheeks flushed a little when it was added that a sum of three thousand pounds was bequeathed by the testator to his beloved and only child, Marguerite.

This was Gilbert Goring's last will and testament; this was his final disposition of his property. But the lawyer explained that there was still something else which he had to deliver up to the heir—namely, "a letter containing the expression of wishes, heartfelt wishes, which his late esteemed

friend and client had not desired to make public, as they would have been had they been mentioned in a will, and which therefore he had contented himself with enjoining in the most sacred manner on his nephew and heir in a letter, the decrees of which, though they would not hold good in a court of law, would, he was convinced, be respected by a man of such well-known probity and honour as his nephew, Walter Goring."

Immediately after this, Daisy went back to her room, the company dispersed, and the owner of the house and his lawyer were alone together. The latter at once gave into the hands of the former a square, sealed packet, and for at least a couple of hours Walter Goring was employed in reading a portion of the story of his uncle's life, and the statement of his last earnest, heart-felt wishes. What these were may not be told yet. When Walter Goring brought his reading to a conclusion he raised his eyes, and found the round, black orbs of the lawyer fixed upon him.

"You know the contents of this?" he asked.

"Only the latter portion which is drawn up on parchment. I wrote that, for your uncle was undecided whether or not to make its conditions

imperative on you by having it signed by, and signing it in the presence of witnesses. What he might have done eventually I cannot tell ; but you see, as it is, he died relying on *your honour*."

"And his reliance on what no man ever doubted yet shall be justified. One or other of his conditions shall be fulfilled ; so help me God."

"Which do you at present incline towards fulfilling ?" the lawyer asked.

"I don't 'incline towards fulfilling' either, to tell the truth ; but inclination is not to be mentioned in a case like this. Come, what shall we do, Clarke, to get rid of the time till half-past seven ? Are there any horses in the stables besides that fat brown brute that brought us over yesterday ?"

"Only a pair of fatter black brutes that go in the carriage."

"By Jove, I'll see to mending matters then, very soon. I'll go up to Town next week and get a stud together. After all, I shall quarter myself here, and get a lot of my friends about me—the place is too fine to be deserted."

"And how about *la belle* cousin ?"

"Ah ! what am I to do with her ? She talked to me beautifully for an hour to-day, but I didn't

dare to venture to suggest that she must go; and where to send her I don't know. I can't send her to school; and she can't stay here if I do?"

"It would be pleasant, but not proper," the lawyer laughed.

"I daresay I shall think of something soon," Walter said, lightly; "meanwhile let us go and have a look at the stable accommodation. I shall have plenty to do for some months in getting the place as I shall like to see it."

"The drawing-rooms are rather in a state of decay: have you looked at them yet?" Mr. Clarke asked.

"No; the only rooms I've seen besides the dining-room are the study and a sweet sort of little boudoir where my cousin was sitting. Can't we get in through one of these windows? they're open, and they're low enough."

They walked as he spoke towards one of the windows to the left of the entrance door; it was open, and the faded, heavy silken curtains were drawn back. He put his hand on the sill and vaulted lightly into the room, calling out—"Come along, Clarke!" and the next instant he wished that he had not shouted to Clarke to come along,

for there, kneeling before a cabinet, the glass of which was freshly broken, he saw Daisy.

She started to her feet as he entered, and gave a little cry of anger—not of fear.

“What do you come in in that way for?” she asked; and he replied—

“What are you doing here?”

“Looking for something that belongs to me, Mr. Goring,” she replied haughtily.

“Excuse me, Daisy, dear, but you shouldn’t have done it in this way,” he said, good-humouredly. He was intensely relieved to find that Clarke had not followed him.

“Excuse me, but I should, since I’d no other way; this room is yours and I’d no right in it—and the cabinet is yours and I ought not to have broken it—but the picture is mine, and I will have it!”

“What picture, Daisy?”

“My mother’s—my own darling mother’s,” the girl said, sullenly. “I wanted to get it away before you saw it—he showed it to me once, and showed me where he kept it, and pretended that it was his love for her had made him keep it—his love for her! I determined that I’d take it away as soon as I could; and you’ll let me have it, won’t you?”

won't you?" she continued, in a voice of passionate entreaty. "It will be nothing to you, and it's so much to me."

He went over and tried the door; it was fast locked. "We won't risk cutting our hands by putting them through this broken glass; besides, young lady, we should have to destroy that fine fluted silk before we could get at what you want: let us go and look for the key, about a thousand were put on the study table labelled this morning."

She put both her hands round his arm.

"How good you are," she said, coaxingly.

"I can't return the compliment, Daisy," he said, kindly; "instead of making a small scene about getting your picture, why didn't you come, or send, and ask me for it properly?"

Then they found the key, and went back to the dilapidated drab silk drawing-room.

"You'll know the picture directly," she began, excitedly; "it's in an oval frame, with my name, Marguerite, traced at the bottom—and she's something like me, only her hair is golden, and her face pretty."

Her own face looked pretty enough as she spoke,

watching him with parted lips, and cheeks into which a bright blush had mounted. When he found the picture he handed it to her without giving the face so much as a glance, and when she had clasped it caressingly to her bosom, she held it out, saying—

“Won’t you look at her—my mother?”

“You have forgotten,” he said, gently, “that only last night you didn’t wish me to know anything about her, Daisy; I won’t take advantage of this to force your confidence.”

“Thank you,” she said, quietly, withdrawing her picture again and turning to leave the room.

He watched her as she walked along. She moved beautifully; not with a mere natural grace and ease, but with a certain studied elegance that had evidently been taught her. Then for the first time he noticed the rare symmetry of her figure.

“She’s built something like the girl I met at Walsh’s the other night,” he thought; “and she’s not unlike her in other respects, though the other’s so dark.”

Thinking this, he went back into the garden to Mr. Clarke, and told that gentleman that the drab drawing-room was in a state of decay and no

mistake, whatever the others might be. "I've managed to smash the glass of one of the cabinets already," he said ; but he added no word relative to Daisy.

It was arranged that the two gentlemen should return to town together on the following day (Saturday), and that in the course of the evening Walter should communicate this arrangement to his ward, and at the same time sound her as to her own wishes about her future manner of life. "Not that she's likely to suggest anything feasible, but still I may as well hear what she has to say about it." He had determined to obviate any immediate awkwardness by not coming back himself to Goring Place until he could induce the Walshes to come with him. "Then *she'll* make it all straight," he said to himself with a lively remembrance of his friend's fertility of resource in all social difficulties.

Nevertheless, though he felt thus secure in the thoughts of Mrs. Walsh's future partisanship, his heart rather misgave him, when he found himself in the presence of his ward. She was seated on a low stool near an open window, in a cloud of crape, and she had been crying. On the whole she looked very fragile, and gentle, and pretty.

"I'm very glad you have come," she said, lifting up her head and holding out her hand to him cordially. Coming out as it did from the cloud of crape he could see that it was a very beautiful hand and arm which was thus extended to him; it was not only a hand that an artist would have admired, but it was an artistic hand; a hand that expressed a very strong feeling for the beautiful. "I'm very glad you have come, and I shall be very glad when that man goes away, for then I shall see more of you, I hope."

"I am going away with him to-morrow, but when I come back——"

"Going away to-morrow," she said; "are you really?"

"Yes, really."

"What for?"

"To go up and settle some business, and see some people, and get horses and friends to come down here and cheer us up a bit."

"I shall be glad enough to see the horses, but I hope the friends won't come yet; if they do, I shall see nothing of you."

"You will see nothing of me till they do come."

“Why not?”

“Because I shall not return until Mr. and Mrs. Walsh, very old friends of mine, can come with me.”

“Why not?” she persisted.

He laughed. “If you will have it, then, because I won’t have it said that my ward is in a bachelor’s house when there are no married ladies there.”

“Uncalled-for precautions,” she said, sadly; “as far as I’m concerned, my name can’t be called in question.”

“It is now my turn to ask ‘Why not, Daisy?’”

“Because I have none,” she answered, almost fiercely; then she added more softly, “it’s rather hard, Mr. Goring, that I should feel this, isn’t it? That’s my inheritance, to know it, and to feel it from the bottom of my heart.”

She crossed her white arms over on her knees, letting the cloudy crape float back from off them as she did so, and then she bent forward till her little head rested on them. The attitude was a wonderfully willowy, graceful one; the girl was like a cat, in that, do what she would, she never did anything awkwardly. He watched her admiringly for a few

minutes, and thought and wondered what Mrs. Walsh would think of her? Then he felt uncomfortable; he fancied she was crying.

“Daisy, Daisy!” he said, imploringly, “believe that all I do is for your good, and to ensure your happiness.” Then he tried to raise the bowed head from the folded arms, and, when he had succeeded, she looked at him reproachfully, and the tears fell down heavily in big drops.

“Daisy, don’t cry—I can’t stand it. What *can* I do?” he cried.

“Promise me that you won’t send me away to live with some old harridan of a woman, or have one here to live with me,” she sobbed.

“I promise. Yes—yes; do *not* cry, my dear child. Come and sing me something.”

When he said that, Daisy cleared up in a moment, and bounded to the piano, and the next moment she was singing, at the full Daisy-power, that wonderfully joyous, silly little song, which has for refrain the words—

“And I cannot choose but sing how delightful is the day,
And the little birds that sing how very fair!”

and Walter hung enraptured over her.

“Artist ! amend your craft ! with shields nor spears,
Sculpture your Venus Victrix, but—in tears,”

writes Alfred Austin, the brilliant satirist, who has said many things that we do not like of us—but more that we do.

He could not reprove her any longer for singing “under the sad circumstances.” He was not hypocritical enough to desire her to check what appeared to be the natural expression of her feelings. Her voice was remarkably pure, powerful, and well-cultivated. But its most remarkable quality was the quality Walter Goring most admired in it—joyousness. Never a lark had carolled at heaven’s gate more exultantly, apparently, than did this girl. She was great in the pathetic passages, and forcible and telling in the powerful ones ; but it was in the joyous ones that she was unequalled.

As I write of her I think of one whose life path ran parallel with mine for a while, whose will was as wayward, whose heart was as true, whose defiant cobalt blue eyes were as sweetly impertinent, whose antecedents were little less sad, though in a widely different way, and whose voice was as bright a strain of music, as joy-expressing, joy-inspiring a

thing, as were those of this Daisy of mine. And I pause for a moment to write "a blessing on the bright, young, yellow head" that always played the part of a sunbeam to me, and feel that I can write no more to-night.

CHAPTER X.

A GOOD INFLUENCE.

A FEW days after this Walter was down at Roehampton, and Daisy was alone at Goring Place, practising her singing scales morning, noon and night, in order to pleasure him with apparently unpremeditated bursts of melody that should never be half a note untrue or flat when he returned. The one dread she had about her vocalisation was, that she might not "come back" from some high-pitched shivering fit on the upper notes with apparent ease. So now that he, the man whom she wanted to please, was away, she strengthened her voice by all the means of which she had ever heard, and exercised it until its flexibility became a matter of marvel even unto herself. The rumour of the wonderful beauty of it reached the village, and Mrs. Travers, who thumped the harmonium and led the praises of

the Lord in a howl hebdomadally, began to wish to get Daisy to join the choir. But Daisy declined the honour when it was proffered her, in a way that made Mrs. Travers remember "the girl's origin" at once.

While Daisy was making the walls of old Goring Place ring again with bursts of scientifically-managed glee, Walter was at Roehampton seeking to interest Mrs. Walsh about his ward, and for the first time finding Mrs. Walsh utterly unsympathetic. He had gone down there to luncheon, and he had found Mrs. Walsh alone; and then he had made the mistake of introducing the subject of his cousin at once, as if it were of paramount importance to him.

"What would you suggest my doing with her?" he asked, earnestly.

"Send her to school."

"She's past that—in every way."

"From what you told me, I judged her to be a flippant little cub, and thought a year or two's schooling would do her an immense deal of good. I can suggest nothing else."

"She's past schooling in every way, and you did promise to help me about her if I found myself in

a difficulty. I'm in a difficulty now. I mean to live at Goring Place, so *she* can't, that's clear. Where had I better send her."

"Send her back to her own people," Mrs. Walsh said, scornfully.

He shook his head impatiently.

"You won't help me, then?"

"I can't; I am not prepossessed by what you have told me about her."

"I have tried to give you my own impressions of her, and I certainly am prepossessed. I was very much in hopes that you would have liked her, in which case I should have placed her with some duenna near you, in order that you might have seen a good deal of her."

"I have no vocation that way," Mrs. Walsh said, coldly. "From what you have told me about her, I think she must be a pert, underbred, flirting girl."

"Flirting! Good Heavens! Poor child, that was far enough from her thoughts."

"Oh, nonsense! Don't make her into a heroine brimming over with fine feelings. She tried a few Clapham school-girl tricks on you, and even she must have been amused to see how wonderfully they told. Is she pretty?"

“Hardly—yes, rather; in figure she’s something like that Miss St. John.”

“Miss St. John has the typhus fever, and is not expected to recover.”

He started as if he had been shot. The girl had interested him very much, though other things had put her out of his head. He had not been wrought upon to the falling in love point, but he had been very much interested in her. So now when Mrs. Walsh said “she is not likely to recover,” he started as if he had been shot, and exclaimed—

“Good God! you don’t say so. Poor girl!”

Now that Miss St. John was down nearly unto death, Mrs. Walsh could be very just, if not generous, to her.

“Yes, she is,” she replied; “she caught it nursing one of her sister’s children. Mrs. Prescott is only a selfish, lovely idiot, you know, although all you men make such an absurd fuss about her, because she smiles at all your platitudes; so directly the eldest child was taken ill she rushed and ensconced herself in a far corner of the house with the well ones, and left the nursing to her sister.”

“My idea of Mrs. Prescott was that the only mind she had was the maternal.”

"It's only one of the many mistakes you make about women."

"I made no mistake about her sister. I thought her what she has proved herself—a brave, kind-hearted girl."

"You had such a good opportunity of judging while she was in the conservatory with you, of course. Shall we go for a drive this afternoon?"

"Yes," he agreed to the proposition. So they had her own pony-carriage out, and went for a long drive, and while they were out they discussed what style of phaeton and trap it would be best to send down to Goring Place, and she was interested as to the colour of his horses, and altogether talked to him so bewitchingly, that he forgot both Charlie St. John and his cousin Daisy. Moreover, it was decided while they were out, that she should persuade Ralph to take her down to Goring Place as soon as Walter could get a few horses and some other things together that were needed at once. "And till you go, you'll stay with us, won't you?" she asked; "if you don't, I shall think you've grown too big a man."

So until he went back with the Walshes' as his

guests to Goring Place, he stayed at Roehampton, and though the time seemed very short to him, Daisy had more than a fortnight's clear practice of those upper notes with which she wanted to astonish him on his return. He meanwhile thought very little of Daisy, only wondered at intervals "how she would hit it off" with Mrs. Walsh.

He tried very hard, he made frequent and earnest efforts to get into the same grooves in which he had run so easily before he was a man of property. "I shall have cause to curse Goring Place if it makes me an idle hound," he said one morning to Mrs. Walsh. "I never do anything like work now; I've forgotten where I left all my young people. I shall never get them into position."

Then she urged him to try, begging him to read up bits of it to her, and to think out some scenes that they had often talked over together, and to work on at his novel generally, in fact.

"I shall be sorry that you ever heard of Goring Place, too, if it makes you lax about literature."

"Do you think more of my fame than my fortune?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, warmly, like a true woman;

and he rose at once to get the long neglected MS., and as he passed out of the room he paused by her side for a moment to say—

“Thanks for that, my goddess.”

And she replied, kindly—

“Ralph and I have always hoped such bright things for you.”

She was a woman whose little airs, and graces, and caprices, all shown out of regard for him, were worth enduring, after all.

It is far from a pleasant thing to read one's own MS. works aloud, as a rule. The majority of people are utterly incapable of following the interest, unless each connecting link is laid before them; the majority also are addicted to the asking of awkward questions about “what you mean to do with so and so?” and “how such and such an incident is to be worked” into the general pattern without looking patchy? As one is usually quite as much in the dark as one's interrogator as to the ultimate end of the means used, and as one has at the same time lied to the venial extent of asserting that the “whole plan is clearly sketched out,” the position must be admitted to be an awkward, not to say a humiliating one.

But surely there can be no man—or woman either—so cursed by fate, none so utterly desolate, but that at some period or other of his literary career he has met with an entirely appreciative listener. Met with one who follows him, and understands almost before he does himself—on whom no point is thrown away, no epigram wasted—one whom the pathos touches to no feigned tenderness, and from whom the humour wrings no falsely gleeful smiles. A sympathetic auditor in fact, who above all things, abstains from the disgusting habit of charging the writer with having made lame sketches of self or friends in any of the characters. Such a listener is a crown of glory—a superb joy to the one who is listened to: and such a listener was Horatia Walsh.

I say that this woman was his friend, and a very good, true friend to him too, for distracting as were the circumstances through which he had but just passed, he got into harness again under her influence, and began to do some very useful work at her feet. Many of her female friends, could they have witnessed the scene of this morning—the beautiful woman sitting there on a low couch in a corner of the shaded room, and the young attractive man

reading page after page of his own impassioned words to her—many of her female friends, had they witnessed this, would have bridled their blameless heads, and believed hard things of them both. Yet in reality she was only urging him by the mute influence of an interest and a trust in him, that was felt rather than expressed, to touch a noble aim. He knew that she believed in his best. He knew that she had reliance on his belief in this confidence of hers; and she was his friend, for he desired to justify her faith in him. In just the same way would she stand and see the best, and feel the best, in the pictures her husband was painting. But many people declared that the interest she took in these latter was but cold and artificial, and that the interest she took in Walter Goring's works was the genuine thing. She knew well that this was said, and she smiled her proud smile about it, knowing that they wronged her—that was all.

The reading of his story to Mrs. Walsh brought up Walter Goring's own interest in it again to the working point; and so starting fresh as he did, he made great progress in it during the remainder of the time he spent at Roehampton. "I shall take it down and polish it off in time to get it out by the

end of September," he said. "I shall devote the winter to the sports and pastimes of my country, and go in for the collecting new ideas concerning country life; after this is finished, I don't write another line till the spring."

"And then you'll break out into a novel all over horses and men in pink; your hero will 'ride straight' through the book, and your heroine do marvellous things in the way of 'gentling' refractory colts and teaching setter-dogs to 'down-charge;' that is always the result of an author going down into the country to write a novel quietly."

He laughed: "Feminine influence shall intervene, and strike out whatever may appear too animal in the sense you mean."

"Whose influence? Your cousin's?"

"Yours, of course, if you'll honour me by exercising it still."

"I promise I will, even if you make a heroine of Daisy."

"Or of Miss St. John?" he asked, laughing.

"No: in that case I couldn't. I should feel no interest in a book in which such a very uninte-

resting character had a prominent place ; it may be bad taste on my part, but to me Miss Charlie St. John is the type of mediocrity in manner, appearance, and mind ; and" (Mrs. Walsh reserved her heaviest shot for the last) "the worst of it is, that she is too old to improve."

He laughed good-humouredly ; on the whole he did not dislike this display of animus ; it was not at all uncomplimentary to himself.

"I think you would like her better in a book than out of it."

"Yes," she replied, coolly ; "because I could put her down when I chose."

This conversation took place the day before they left Roehampton for Goring Place. The following morning they started, and the stud Walter Goring had got together met them in charge of three grooms at the Shoreditch station. There were six horses in all—a couple of carriage-horses, a couple of hunters, and a splendid pair of roadsters, one of which, a chestnut, beautiful as a star, was "warranted to carry a lady." In the midst of his London business and literary bliss, Walter Goring had remembered the delight which had expressed itself in Daisy's face at the mention of the horses

that were coming down, and he promised himself the pleasure of teaching her to ride, and watching the graceful lines of her perfect figure, in at once the most trying and the most becoming position in which it could be seen.

CHAPTER XI.

GLOVES !

AT a first, a cursory glance at the great subject of gloves, one may imagine it easily to be divided into the two classes of gloves (kid or otherwise) that fit and those that don't. But this is, to say the least of it, a very superficial view to take of a matter of such colossal interest to that vast section of humanity which consents to render itself partially incapable, through the agency of, and for the sake of supporting, the glover and trader in the skins of the pretty little baby goats.

Will anyone of the countless thousands who will doubtless peruse this be kind enough to recall a vision of the first pair of gloves into which he or she was inducted? They will shrink from the wraith of those lamb's-wool disfigurements, probably? Well, I will do it for them even at the

risk of wringing some fair soul to anguish. They were guileless of finger divisions, those first hand-coverings of yours and mine. They were of thick texture, and undistinguishable outline. The only art that was attended to in their construction was the art of keeping baby's hands warm. They were of all colours, blue and pink predominating. And they were generally tied round the wrist, to the detriment of our circulation, with a ribbon of the same colour, but a different shade. What pride our mothers and aunts and grandmothers, and the rest of the ministering spirits of our childhood, had in muffling us in these knitted abominations! How regardless they were of the fact that we immediately gave our hands a vapour bath, a thing that might have had an extremely injurious effect upon our immature organisation, by thrusting them a long way down our throat, and then waving them wildly abroad over so much of the world as came under them conveniently! How we made scientific experiments on colour, by extracting with our lips as much as we could from the confining ribbon! How surely within ten minutes of their being put upon us, was one lost, and the other mislaid, with so much baby-tact that it was never found again! What a

refreshing and improving spectacle one of those gloves would be to us now ! How small our hands were ! and how innocent ! and how entirely devoted to our own pleasures ! which last consisted mainly in conveying everything that was nice, and much that was not, to our mouths !

Our next step in the glove world was not nice. We went from warm, soft, ingratiating lamb's-wool, which, if not pretty was at least pleasant, into Lisle thread, or spun silk. The former of these useful manufactures was a loathsome one. We suffered them because we were anxious that the dignity of gloves should be ours at any cost—any cost of pain to ourselves, that is. Our parents were not equally magnificent in giving us the dignity at any cost of money. But these Lisle-thread gloves were an awful suffering ! They grated harshly on our skin every time we drew them on, in a way that sent us “abroad in the meadows to see the young lambs,” and in quest of other genial Sanford and Merton sights, with our teeth on edge and our tempers ruffled ! But we were then in obedience to some imbecile imaginary law of gentility, against which we were taught to think that we should offend if we stripped them off and gave our hapless paws the

fair play which was not denied to Neptune and Trim and the rest of our canine playfellows. We are ready now, of course, as grown-up sensible people, to suffer a little for beauty's sake. But I think we must all regret the suffering that odious thread of Lisle imposed upon our youth, and which we bore, not for beauty's, but mythical gentility's sake.

Spun silk was a milder form of agony—that is to say, it did not “hurt,” it simply stuck to us like a caterpillar, a bad name, an undesirable acquaintance, and other things of that sort. When we drew off gloves in those days we always left a light hairy trimming on the backs of our hands from the silk of which the coverings were composed.

The next was an honourable and glorious step in the days when I was young—we went into our first kids! It is nothing now, when infants of six months, or their mammas for them, are fastidious about the cut of the thumb, and object to the triangular gusset because it makes them crease in the back. But in olden times, the first time we inserted our hands into kids was a white-stone day—a day to be remembered and talked about with pride, tempered with awe, amongst our compeers.

They were not always a brilliant success. Mine, for instance, were a decided failure. I loved them dearly for half-an-hour, at the end of that time I was prone to confess to myself that they bored me. I could not take a firm hold of anything in life by reason of the liberality with which kid had been expended on the fingers. The buttoning them cost me a small piece of flesh, for I could not accomplish it for myself, and the kind friend who assisted in installing me into these new honours could not achieve it until a small piece of me had been sacrificed between the button and her determined nail. Looking back upon them now, I must confess, too, that their hue was unpleasant. They were of an olive green; they would recklessly crease themselves to a degree that brought me wrath; the price of them was mentioned, too, with severity, and I was bidden to remember that kid gloves did not grow upon trees, for which, all things considered, I was devoutly thankful. Unmixed bliss not being in the wearing them, I was very glad when they left me, which they did shortly in a darkly mysterious manner, which brought me more wrath. I have since had reason to suppose that they afforded first recreation and then indigestion to a lethargic pet

King Charles spaniel, who was in the habit of trying to eat everything, from the foundation of the house, at which in his frequent hours of leisure he would dig furiously, to his master's boot-laces, and failing, poor dog, in consequence of having left his teeth behind him in a trap that he endeavoured to swallow early in life.

Gloves have been treated at length because they were the first rock on which Daisy split after meeting with Mrs. Walsh.

Walter Goring and his guests had reached Goring Place in time to dress comfortably for a seven o'clock dinner on Saturday night. On their arrival, Mrs. Walsh had been straightway conducted to the rooms that had been set apart for her. Mr. Walsh had foundered in the corridor with the Lelys and Vandycks, and Walter had gone at once to look for his cousin. He found her, as he expected, in her own sitting-room. It was the only room which had been refurnished for the last seventy or eighty years, and it had been made as bright and pretty as brilliant chintz, and polished wood, and gold mouldings, and the pale green watered paper could make it. Poor Gilbert Goring had tried to touch his daughter's heart through its adornments, and failed.

The girl was a born actress. She knew intuitively the situation and the scenes in which she showed to the best advantage. It was more with a desire of throwing a halo of grace, and sweetness, and refinement around herself, than from any love of the flowers, that she had laid a heavy tribute on the gardens this day, and bedecked her room plentifully with the fairest blooms she could find. She wanted Walter to come in, and be struck at once with sweet odours and sweet sounds. Young as she was, she had a great notion of getting at men's hearts through their senses. So she grouped roses about everywhere, in tall vases and flat baskets, and wore a pale buff queen of flowers in her bosom, and, as the hour approached for him to come in, she seated herself at the piano and flooded the air with melody. The offspring of passion, she was instinct with it almost unconsciously.

He opened the door quietly, and watched her and listened admiringly to her for a minute or two before she became conscious of his presence. He wished that he had brought Mrs. Walsh to see and hear her, and be charmed as he was with the air of sweet unpremeditation and unconsciousness. He little knew that Mrs. Walsh would have seen

through it all, and despised her for one of the little tricks of the trade with which she herself was not wholly unacquainted. Women see through these artless artifices much more clearly than men ; they are on the track remorselessly in an instant, and rarely leave it until they have run down the motive and held it up to scorn.

At last that electric power which passes from the liked to the liker thrilled her, and she knew, without hearing a sound of him, without catching a glimpse of him, without giving a sign that she knew it, that he was there and that he was looking at her. Very carefully and very brilliantly she finished her song, and then very leisurely bent down and selected from the music-rack that song which we all laugh at and all like from some reason or other, and then treated Walter to a burst of the melodious conviction—

“ He will return, I know him well,
He will not leave me here to die.”

What man could have stood it ?

“ I should rather think he wouldn't leave you ‘ here ’ or anywhere else to die ! ” he exclaimed, going up to her quickly ; and she started up, putting one hand out to greet him, and the other down on

the music stool to steady it, making her figure take a graceful curve as she moved, that was not lost upon that lover of the beautiful, Mr. Walter Goring.

“When did you come in ?” she asked.

“Two minutes ago.”

“And I meant to have been down to meet you ! How dreadfully provoking. Has Mrs. Walsh come ?”

“Yes ;” he replied. “She’s gone to dress, and I must do the same, but I thought I would just look you up first.” Then he added, “I want you to come down with me presently and be ready to receive her. You must play hostess, you know, Daisy.”

“I’ll play anything you like, I’m so glad to have you back again, Mr. Goring.”

“I don’t call you ‘Miss Goring.’”

Her brow crimsoned.

“You don’t do it, partly because I’m your ward ; and partly because it’s not my name, I suppose. But what should I call you if I didn’t call you ‘Mr. Goring ?’”

He didn’t like to say, “Call me Walter ;” there is a sort of sentimentalism about such a request from which the bravest man may shrink without reproach after one-and-twenty. The Christian name should always rise to the lips spontaneously ;

there is something inharmonious about asking and being asked to utter it. Nevertheless, he wished her to call him "Walter," in a cousinly sort of way, at the outset before Mrs. Walsh, so he said—

"Oh! call me anything, or nothing; not 'Mr. Goring'—I can't stand that!"

To which she replied as simply as possible, "Very well, Walter."

"It's a quarter to seven now, and we dine at seven—I must be off and dress: how well you look, Daisy."

She glanced over her shoulder at the effect of the black dress she wore, then a purely feminine difficulty which had been much oppressing her, came to the surface and would be spoken about.

"O Walter," she began rather piteously, "I have been in such trouble; the dressmaker at Deneham is a beast."

"Is she, indeed?" he said, laughing.

"You wouldn't laugh if you had to wear what she had made. And that Mrs. Walsh will have come down with all her London Paris-modelled things!"

"That Mrs. Walsh' won't judge you by your

dress, Daisy," he said, gravely ; " besides, dear, you couldn't look better than you do."

" O couldn't I indeed," the girl cried out heartily ; " you give me plenty of rope in a French milliner's, and see whether I wouldn't come out—looking a trifle better. And as to Mrs. Walsh ' not judging me by my dress,' I don't care one bit for her judgment. I only want to look as well as she does."

He was on the point of answering—"you do that," but he remembered just in time that he did not think so ; and that moreover, his goddess would not like him to think so. Therefore he checked the utterance, and said instead, that he would go and dress, and return for Daisy in ten minutes.

When he was gone Daisy rushed to her bedroom, and ascertained through the agency of a cheval and hand-glass exactly how the skirt of her dress looked. Then she thought a thanksgiving for that Mrs. Walsh had no cheval in her room,—put her yellow hair into more perfect order, and then returned to her boudoir, to look as composed as she could, and await Walter's coming to lead her down to receive the guests.

If it be thought that he made rather too much of this young girl, let it be remembered that she

was left in his power as it were; that she had no other friend in the world; and that he was a very chivalrous man.

Presently he came, and she went down with him into the big drab drawing-room—the same room in which he had found her kneeling before the broken cabinet. The stiff old furniture—the absence of flowers—the look of disuse altogether which was over the apartment, struck Walter forcibly, coming as he did from Daisy's room above.

“I told Mrs. Marsh to make the place look as well as she could with the old things; but she doesn't seem to have effected much; however, it does not much matter,” he continued, “Mrs. Walsh understands that she is to see Goring Place in the rough;—you might have had some flowers here though, Daisy.”

“I'll get some after dinner, if you will come out and help me to gather them,” she replied.

“We will see about that,” he answered. And then the door opened slowly, and Mrs. Walsh came into the room.

He took Daisy's hand, and led her towards Mrs. Walsh as he would have led a child. He forgot entirely the speech he had made up-stairs, relative

to Daisy playing the hostess; and Daisy, mortified at this forgetfulness of his, and feeling resentfully that he was thinking more of her youth and helplessness than of anything else at this moment, imparted as unchildlike a rigidity to her bearing as she could, as he said—

“This is the young lady about whom I have talked to you so much,—my ward and cousin, Daisy Goring.”

Mrs. Walsh smiled, and held out her hand to the girl with a grand graciousness that was beautiful to behold from the impartial spectator's point of view, and Daisy held out her hand with an absence of all cordiality in the movement, and an absence of all graciousness in her face. She was put in the position of the patronised, and her pride rebelled against it.

Honestly in her heart of hearts the girl was prepossessed by the woman. Daisy had chosen to picture Mrs. Walsh as a pretty, lively, domestic-mannered woman, who would be wanting her (Daisy) to sit and work with her of a morning, and otherwise interfere aggressively during the term of their sojourn together at Goring Place. But from this stately superb beauty no interference of

a petty or aggravating nature could be dreaded. Besides, her taste was gladdened by the sight of the grace and beauty and calm in which Mrs. Walsh was steeped, so to say. Daisy had a keen appreciation of that order of loveliness which may be seen from any side, and which is always lovely; and of that passive grace which takes up what the sternest critic can but feel to be the most exquisite of attitudes, and retains it for half an hour. Mrs. Walsh was an adept in this patrician art of keeping quiet. Her stillness was not the stillness of stupidity. During her longest periods of inaction, she never looked inane. Even when she sat and looked long-past the person who was addressing her, as she did occasionally, it was with the far-off look of the sibyl, not with the vacant eye of the non-understanding. This composed grace, this grand loveliness, was precisely the thing that would appeal to a fluctuating, restless nature, such as Daisy's. She liked the contrast to herself. Mrs. Walsh was to her, like a mountain, or an oratorio,—a thing to be marvelled at and admired.

But the lady was not prepossessed by the girl. Daisy's good looks and Daisy's grace were of that order which depend much on the circumstances

surrounding and the temper of the possessor. Miss Goring had looked very pretty up in her own room ten minutes before. She had thrown herself into the spirit of her songs with a certain dramatic power that is always attractive. She had been flushed and excited with gratified vanity, the sound of her own voice had thrilled her; and the feeling that a man was standing and admiring her very much, had thrilled her still more. Let it not be supposed for a moment that Daisy had a single warm feeling towards her cousin Walter. She had not; but she was very open to admiration, and very eager for it, and not at all unwilling to flatter any man forward on the path of offering it to her. These things combined to give a sort of nervous grace to her face and bearing, when she felt—as she had felt upstairs—that such charm as she had was patent to a man. But here, before Mrs. Walsh, she fell flat—not from embarrassment, she never was embarrassed—but from a conviction that even at her best Mrs. Walsh would not admire her; and that even if Mrs. Walsh had done so, she would not have cared for another woman's admiration. In fact, she had no liking for her own sex—no appreciation of it—no desire to stand well with it—no

sense of the value of its sympathy. Its companionship offered her no excitement, and excitement was a thing she craved with an unhealthy craving that made her yearn for it in any form. All this Mrs. Walsh read in her at their first meeting: and, consequently, Mrs. Walsh was not prepossessed in Daisy's favour, foreseeing, as she did, that his ward would give her friend Walter Goring some trouble before he had done with her. Mrs. Walsh little thought of the trouble he was in about Daisy already—a trouble he did not like to confide to any one—a trouble he could not share with any one—a trouble that made him, even in these early days of his proprietorship, regret that he had ever heard of Goring Place.

After dinner they went over a portion of the house, and still Daisy felt at a disadvantage, and so was at one. Walter consulted Mr. and Mrs. Walsh about the colours to be employed on the walls, and the carpets to be put upon the floors; and Mrs. Walsh came off her pedestal, and condescended to give sound advice on the subject of upholstery; and Daisy walked in sulky silence by Mr. Walsh's side, and disapproved with her eyes and mute lips of every little design he sketched, either in his note-

book or in words, for the ornamentation or arrangement of anything. But at last twilight fell, and then her turn came. Walter proposed that they should all go into "Daisy's sitting-room and have tea while she sang to them;" and Mrs. Walsh acceded to the proposition with one of her grand indifferent smiles; then Daisy felt her hour of triumph was coming, and thanked the Lord for having given her patience to practice as she had been doing of late.

They went into Daisy's sitting-room, and as soon as they entered Mrs. Walsh read a little more of Miss Goring's character. Mrs. Walsh was a votary of that creed which worships the happy perfect medium, and which holds that it is very possible to have too much of a good thing. She objected to lavish profusion; she was as classical in her taste as in her person.

But Daisy revelled in luxuriousness. She liked an atmosphere to be heavy with fragrance and warm with colour; she liked the air to throb with sweet, soft sounds; she liked a subdued, artificial light to be shed over things. For all her fair, freckled face, her yellow hair, and her blue eyes, there was a strong touch of the oriental about this

girl. The excitement she craved was that of the senses, not of the intellect.

She was herself again now as she went to the piano, her graceful, undulating self. Mrs. Walsh lounged on a couch, and looked at the flowers, at the pictures, at the ceiling—at anything but Daisy; and Daisy marked and determined that Mrs. Walsh should look at her before long—aye, and marvel at her too. She asked Mrs. Walsh “What songs she liked,” and Mrs. Walsh “Didn’t care;” and then Daisy turned carelessly to Walter, and Walter went up and turned over her songs irresolutely, and finally left the selection to herself.

She sang! What she sang is of little consequence; suffice it to say, that she sang song after song (always pausing indifferently between them, and waiting to be asked to “go on” by one or other of the gentlemen), until Mrs. Walsh lounged no longer, but sat and listened, as Daisy had vowed to herself Mrs. Walsh should sit and listen. She sang as though she had been Queen Titania’s darling Puck, endowed with the voice of Adelina Patti—as though she had felt the full meaning of every word she uttered, which she did *not*. Her bell-like notes rang pæans of triumph; she threw her head back,

and warbled like a nightingale, and had about as much feeling in the matter as a nightingale may be supposed to have. The motive which inspired her was the thought that two men were listening to her enraptured now, and that it was good practice for enrapturing others in the days to come. The true artist feeling of striving to excel in it for its own sake she had not; but she possessed to the full the wonderful dramatic power of seeming to have it.

Perhaps, could she have heard a brief conversation which took place between Walter and the Walshes, she would have left off rather sooner than she did. Mr. Walsh was struck with that same expression of restraint—of all not being given out—which Mr. Clarke had described as “suppressed power.” He was much struck with it. She had precisely the expression, and almost the face and head, which he had been in search of for some time, in order to introduce a few touches of truth into a picture he was painting from Marmion of Constance de Beverley. The passage he had selected was that one in which the girl threatens her murderers with a variety of unpleasant things when Marmion’s late remorse should wake; but he had not been able to work out his idea in consequence of failing

to convey the mingled expression of innocence, determination, and bitter feeling for a heavy wrong wrought, which he had conceived for Constance. Daisy had the look he wanted; therefore he watched her with interest, and while she was singing he whispered to Walter,—

“Wonderfully she throws herself into the spirit of what she’s singing for an amateur?”

“Yes,” Walter replied; “a little training and she would feign with the first on the boards now.”

“She shows intense feeling.”

“And does not feel a bit, I’m half afraid,” Walter answered, rather seriously; “if she did she wouldn’t indicate it in the admirable manner she does. My own belief, you know, is that great mental power and great musical (executive) power never do go together: she has the latter unquestionably, and I much doubt her having the former.”

Mrs. Walsh had listened to what passed between the two men, and now she spoke,—

“I think I know what you mean, and I agree with you, Mr. Goring; it’s very extraordinary, but I’m sure that it is so—hers is a face that expresses clearly and decidedly much more than she feels.”

“I am afraid of it myself; and yet she’s very interesting, isn’t she?” Walter replied. Then he rose, and carried a cup of tea to Daisy, and thanked her for her singing; and Daisy was very happy, not knowing what he had just been saying and hearing of her. On the whole it must be admitted that there was more than a touch of truth in Mrs. Walsh’s estimate of the girl, about whom there were few things more genuine than her artificiality.

The next day was Sunday, and it had been decreed that it would only be right and proper for Walter Goring, Esq., and his guests to go to church in the morning, as it became those on whom the eyes of Deneham were fixed.

“It’s impossible to walk—it’s more than a mile. How shall we go over?” Walter had said at breakfast.

“Not in a close carriage, please,” Mrs. Walsh answered; “I have quite enough of that in town.”

“We’ll go in the trap, then—no, we can’t all go in the trap. I will drive you, if you’ll allow me, and Ralph and Daisy must go in something else. I’ll go and see about it.”

Daisy followed him out into the hall, and he saw

when she caught his arm and leant upon it, and looked up in his face, that there was something wrong.

"What's the matter, Daisy?" he asked.

"If I can't go in the trap with you, I'll stay at home," she replied.

"You can't go in the trap with me, Daisy, because I have offered to drive Mrs. Walsh, and I can't put you up behind with John."

"Very well, then I'll stay at home," she replied.
He laughed.

"In such matters, of course, you'll please yourself, Miss Goring; but I could have wished you to go."

"Why should I be boxed up in the close carriage with Mr. Walsh more than his wife?"

"For the simple reason that he can't drive; therefore it would be no use putting you in the phaeton with him. However, make up your mind; will you go or not? If you don't go, Mr. Walsh can go on the back of the trap with us."

"If you wish me to go, Walter, I'll go."

"I'm glad of it. I want you to be a great deal with Mrs. Walsh for many reasons."

He was not quite sure what these many reasons

were himself; therefore it was hard on him when Daisy asked, coaxingly,—

“ Tell me some of them, Walter.”

“ I should like you to grow as like her as possible,” he replied, rather lamely. It must be confessed this was not the best way to recommend his friend to his ward.

“ I’ll do my best to grow tall and Juno-like ; if I don’t succeed you won’t attribute the failure to obstinacy, will you, Walter ? and now I’ll go and get ready to sit and be improved by her mere presence in the pew for an hour or two. Oh ! you haven’t heard him yet, but old Travers is so prosy.”

Then she went up to dress for church, and Walter went out to his stables to settle about which horses should be employed for the service.

Daisy’s bed-room commanded the drive and the lawn in front of the house. Presently, while she was putting on her bonnet, she saw Mrs. Walsh walking up and down with her host, ready dressed, and waiting for the trap to come round.

There was a flow about Mrs. Walsh’s long silver-grey silk robe which the Deneham dressmaker had failed to give Daisy’s ; but this Daisy could have

borne. The thing she could not bear—the thing against which she girded fiercely in her soul—was the contrast between Mrs. Walsh's gloved hands and her own. Mrs. Walsh's looked as if they were chiselled out of silver-grey marble; the proportions of her own far more beautiful hands were spoilt, utterly spoilt, by the ill-fitting, baggy, black ones, which were the best Deneham could supply. They would not button at the wrist; they would stretch themselves to an uncalled for width over the backs of her hands; they would leave loose ends to themselves at the tips of her fingers. Altogether, they contrasted odiously with the gloves of the woman who was promenading beneath her window; and so Daisy went to church, and sat through the two hours' service, vigorously hating Mrs. Walsh; and she no more succeeded in hiding the hatred than she did the hands from that lady.

Poor Daisy! It was such a trifle, such an unworthy crumple in her rose-leaf, that it cannot be hoped that sympathy will be felt for her by the reader. Yet, why not? Has not every woman at some period or other of her career been utterly thrown out of gear, and put at a disadvantage by some such trifle as this? Moreover, ill-fitting gloves are

no trifle ; they impede that free action of the hands, deprived of which the active-handed ones of this world are reduced to the first stage of imbecility. She looked at Mrs. Walsh's hands, and saw, as I said before, that they looked as though they were chiselled out of silver-grey marble. She looked at her own, and lo ! and behold they looked, crumpled, lax, and feeble. Then she, thinking that Walter marked the contrast more clearly than he did, gave birth to and nursed carefully a dislike and distrust of Mrs. Walsh, which effectually precluded her even desiring to seem well and do well in that lady's eyes. "She wants to make Walter think as little as possible of my looks beside her own," Daisy thought; and the thought kept her silent, and prevented her raising her glorious voice in the singing, as Mrs. Travers had fondly hoped she would do when she came in.

CHAPTER XII.

GETTING IN ORDER AT GORING PLACE.

THEY lived a very busy life at Goring Place for the next three weeks. For fair friendship's sake Mrs. Walsh submitted to the discomforts of the perfume of paint, and the tapping of hammers. Walter had the ceilings freshly grained, and the walls newly coloured, and an army of upholsterers came and took possession, and made that fearful preliminary mess and confusion for which months of after comfort cannot compensate. Under judicious modern treatment the old entrance hall came out with a more mediæval aspect than it had ever laid a claim to in mediæval days. Old oak carvings were matched from the Swiss shop in Regent Street. The periods of each portion of the building were studied carefully, and furniture to befit them respectively was procured. More light was let in

upon the Lelys and Vandykes, under Mr. Walsh's auspices ; a croquet ground was laid down on the lawn, under the auspices of his wife. A French window, slightly out of keeping perhaps, with the rest of the house, was broken out at the end of what had been called a saloon, and it was turned into a billiard-room. From the drawing-room, the rickety old cabinets, with straddling unsteady legs, full of cracked, hideous china, were banished, and modern aid was invoked in the matter of inlaying and marqueterie. Mrs. Walsh came off her pedestal for the whole of the time, and put her own hand to the wheel. She superintended the installation of the new things as only women can—seeing “ what ” should “ go where ” at a glance, and giving, by a few dexterous touches, a homelike occupied air to the newly-bedecked rooms at once. She it was who, walking about from room to room, gave that subtle adjustment to the curtains which professional hands had failed in giving, and which caused them to look like the draperies they were intended to be, instead of the mere so many yards of damask or silk they had appeared before. She it was who put the couches and easy chairs and tables into position. She it was who ordained and insisted upon the right

tone of colouring being preserved in each room. She it was who decreed and enforced the decree, that there should be no over-crowding even of things of beauty. "When outline was lost, beauty was lost," she argued; so, thanks to her taste and firmness, everything had its outline, and was in due and proper proportion to everything else in Walter Goring's reception rooms. In short, in less than a month, through the agency of those two irresistible powers—woman and wealth—Goring Place was in the most perfect order. But Daisy had stood aloof, and had pointedly forborne—much to her cousin's annoyance—to take a share in the discussions or an interest in the ordering. Mrs. Walsh's taste and Daisy's had clashed at first, and Daisy had withdrawn all interest, or, at any rate, withheld all expression of it, with a promptitude that was almost insolent. Mrs. Walsh inclined to the cold and classical and perfectly pure—her own beauty could stand such tests! Daisy on the other hand, inclined to the warm, the luxurious, the lavish—the sensuous, in fact. So it came to pass that there was little intercourse and less sympathy between the two ladies.

They generally sat together of a morning in

Daisy's sitting-room, principally because that was the only room which was not liable to raids from painters and grainers, and others of that ilk. Here they would sit: beautiful Mrs. Walsh with some graceful sort of work in her hands, or some book before her, always apparently at her grand ease, never desirous of anything further, so far as Daisy could see, happy and at peace in her own stateliness; while Daisy, when she was not singing, would be in one lithe fidget—unable to read, unwilling to work, unhappy in being these things; wishing for any sort of break in the monotony of this companionship with a woman to whose beauty she had grown accustomed, and more bored than ever when the break would come in the shape of Walter coming in to read some portion of his novel to them. For then, though for the sake of seeming pleasant in the eyes of the only man present, she would assume a little air and look of interest, poor Daisy could not follow him through sheer inability. In truth, it must be acknowledged that it was not intellectual, but purely animal excitement, which this poor carelessly-grown Daisy craved. The misfortune was, that blinded by the expression of her face, thrown off the track as it were by her intense

dramatic power, Walter Goring accredited her with more sense and more sensibility than she possessed. But even Walter Goring felt, despite that well-sustained look of interest on his cousin Daisy's face, that the honours of these literary mornings were with Mrs. Walsh.

However, on some other mornings they were with Daisy, for the master of Goring Place did not suffer his intention of teaching his ward to ride, to sleep. For the first time or two he took her out on a steady-going old pony, that had belonged to her father; but Daisy's equestrian powers thrived so well under his management, that he speedily promoted her to the chestnut. It occurred to him at length that the skill she displayed was a singular thing indeed, if this was her first experience of riding, so he asked her one morning—

“Had you ever been on horseback before I took you out on the old pony the other day, Daisy?” and she answered—

“Never at Goring Place.”

“I asked if you had ever been on horseback?”

“Yes,” she replied; “back in the life I want to forget, if you will let me, I used to ride.”

This was one of the speeches that taken in con-

junction with that look of suppressed power and restrained feeling in her face, led him into the error of sometimes believing her to be a far cleverer girl than she was in reality. He fancied that it betokened a fixed determination to live down some black memories; whereas, in all probability it meant nothing more than a childish, pettish aversion to being reminded of what had been less agreeable and flattering to her vanity than the present. Moreover, she had discovered that this reticence of hers interested and puzzled him. Therefore she maintained it.

During these long rides he tried hard to draw her into conversation, and find out what she had in her, and she baffled him. She had a knack of saying bright pert things, of so wording an allusion to some personal peculiarity, or some habit of expression in another, that it might almost pass for wit. In fact, she had the art of so phrasing her little superficial observations, that it was not until afterwards that it dawned upon the hearer how very superficial they were in reality. But whenever Walter left off talking about persons or events, and tried to lead the conversation up a step or two, Daisy lapsed into silence. True, she listened

beautifully, but she said never a word; and at last he came to wish heartily, either that she were younger, or he himself older and more patient, in order that he might, without outraging propriety, keep this strange girl with him, and educate her himself.

But this he knew he could not do; and, as he said to Mrs. Walsh, she "was past being sent to school in every way." Still he knew very well that in a few years it was ordained that she should occupy a prominent position in society, and he felt that the onus was on him, her guardian, of fitting her to sustain it gracefully. She had been through the usual wretched boarding-school routine, but of everything beyond it she was hopelessly ignorant. Even the lighter literature of her own country, on which the majority of young girls feed with voracity, was a sealed book to her. On the whole, Walter did not so much regret this latter fact; he said something to himself about her mind being "like a sheet of unsullied paper, fitted to receive any impression," and he set himself seriously to consider the best means of causing it to take only good ones.

Mrs. Walsh was not a particularly useful coad-

jutor at this juncture. When he asked her to make him out a list of books that it would be well to get Daisy to glance at, even if she couldn't be persuaded to read them thoroughly, Mrs. Walsh could only shake her head and look handsome.

"What a shame of you, a clever man like you, to come to me to devise an educational code! If I were you, I should send her to one of those highly respectable ladies, who are always advertising their willingness to undertake the education of neglected adults," she suggested.

"That won't do at all," he replied; "where in the world she can have been to have had such first-rate musical instruction, and to have remained in such profound ignorance of all other things, I can't imagine."

"With professionals, perhaps?"

"Perhaps so; certainly the training her voice has had is excellent; but I doubt her ever having read a line beyond the songs she sings."

"And I doubt her reading even them with understanding, for all she sings them so faultlessly," Mrs. Walsh replied.

Shortly after this, one morning when Walter Goring and his charge were out riding together,

he saw, or thought he saw, a good opportunity of stating some of his intentions. They had been having a brisk gallop over the turf, through a bewildering glade, and Walter, being only a man, was feeling rather more interested in her than usual, for—

“ As she fled fast thro’ sun and shade
The happy winds about her play’d,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid.
She look’d so lovely as she sway’d
The rein with dainty finger tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.”

At least if a man had not, being willing to do so, he might have been forgiven the willingness; and so Walter may be forgiven for feeling a little more warmly than was usual with him about the fair young girl galloping along at his side, seeming so very fresh and fair, and fond of him. Suddenly he exclaimed—

“ Daisy, will you give up an hour every morning to reading with me, while we’re at Goring Place together? ”

“ Will Mrs. Walsh sit and listen to us? ” she asked.

"No, I think not. I want to brush up my own reading a bit, and I want to speak to you about my favourite books; the best way of managing this is for us to read them together, isn't it?"

She looked keenly at him for an instant or two, and then replied—

"I told you once I would do whatever you liked, Walter."

"Then you'll do this?"

She blushed a little.

"Yes, if you think I had better."

"Daisy, dear, don't you care to do it?"

"Yes, if it pleases you."

"But apart from that?"

"Not a bit," she replied, quietly.

"But, my dear child," he began, trying very hard to be paternal, "you wouldn't like to feel yourself behind the conversation,—you wouldn't like to feel left out, as it were, when you're in society? I don't want you to go into the world with the notion in your head, that women have only to look pretty and graceful in order to pass muster."

"Does Mrs. Walsh do much more?" she asked, quietly.

"She does a great deal more; she appreciates

mental worth in others," he replied, somewhat conceitedly ; " and in order to appreciate mental worth, you must have some knowledge of the various ways in which it has been made manifest to the world at divers periods : do you follow me ? "

She nodded her head.

" And in order to gain this knowledge, you must read and think, Daisy ; the art of appreciating them in some degree, however slight, is the art men most prize in women ; you cannot arrive at this without making some effort to understand : will you make the effort ? "

He touched the right chord there—her vanity.

" Yes," she replied, " I'll try ; but look here, Walter. Don't you think that if other ladies leave me behind when they're talking, that I shall leave most of them behind when I sing ? "

" You won't be able to sing all your life, Daisy," he said, laughing.

" No ; nor to talk about your wearisome books all my life either ; I don't want to be a blue."

" Don't alarm yourself, Daisy, dear ; you're not likely to be that." Then he remembered the barely indicated aspirations of the girl he had met some weeks since at a dinner at Mrs. Walsh's, and asked,

"Supposing you were very clever in one thing, Daisy, and could make a name for yourself, or might hope to do so in time, would you try?"

"Yes; on the stage."

"Only on the stage?"

"Oh, yes; in any other way, if I could be famous at once; but on the stage I would work. Do you know, Walter, I think it's the only thing worth living for almost, to have your name called till your ears ring with it; and then to come forward before the lights, and get all the applause and praise to your face. I should love my voice," she continued, with almost a coo, "if I thought that it would ever bring me that."

It was not at all the sort of ambition which, according to Walter Goring's idea, should have animated the breast of a would-be artist. It lacked all the true artist-feeling in fact, regarding as it did the gift merely as a means of attaining an end. Consequently he said, rather coldly—

"It shall never bring you that with my consent, Daisy; come, let us canter now, here's a good bit of turf, and we'll have a talk about these readings which I propose some other day!"

Daisy's outward answer was a smile and a nod;

her inward one was, "I hope to gracious not." Better the idle, dull mornings in her own room with Mrs. Walsh, than a couple of hours over some book, on which she felt sure beforehand she should not be able to concentrate her attention, with a man who never made the slightest approach to love to her.

But Walter Goring had not the least intention of giving up his idea; he was only uncertain as to the best manner of carrying it out. To take a girl of nearly eighteen, and begin at the very beginning, was not at all according to the dictates of his taste; and yet, if he did not begin at the very beginning, it would be merely giving her a thin coat of varnish, liable to crack at any moment. Nothing would have been more congenial to his present feelings than to have taught this charge of his Latin, and made her read "Horace" with him. But this would have been requiring her to run before she could walk, since she was absolutely unacquainted with even the names of our English classics.

He went into the library and walked round it, looking at the backs of the books, in vague expectation of the title of one suggesting, if not the perusal of itself, at least the perusal of some other,

on which the Daisy's mind might begin to expand with something like advantage. His object was to get something that would at the same time amuse her and refer her to something else; something good in itself, but fraught with allusions to still better things. This being his object, it may be doubted whether he could have done better than to put into Miss Daisy's hands Byron's "Bards and Reviewers,"—or a series of leading articles from the "Daily Telegraph."

Walter passed by that portion of the shelf on which "History" stood in stolid stoutness. Gibbon was too grandiose and Hume too heavy for the purpose. "I wonder how she would take to Macaulay and Carlyle?" he thought, and he sent up to town at once for their works complete. When the books came, Daisy took charmingly to Macaulay's "Lays," but to Carlyle not at all.

Day after day the young man, who could have been amusing himself ever so much better, induced the girl for whose future he was accountable to go into his study, and sit and read with him, and hear him speak about what they had been reading. Sometimes he fondly hoped that they really were making a little headway; that Daisy comprehended

and was interested, not alone in the matter, but in the manner in which the matter was put forth. He endeavoured to make her feel the beauty of style as he did, and as Daisy had a marvellous ear, she did experience a certain sense of pleasure in reading sentences that rose and fell harmoniously, and whose rhythm was perfect. He was as rigorous in putting only such works before her as though he had been training her to become a writer herself; and sometimes, when all his efforts fell flat,—when she sighed over Sterne, grew sleepy over Swift, and allowed herself to appear intensely bored over Addison and others of that matchless band of essayists who made the eighteenth century golden—sometimes, when these things were, he did wish within himself that since Fate had made him responsible for a young woman's well-being, it had been for such a one as Charlie St. John. "Called to this work by dulness, Jove, and Fate," he pursued it steadily for a time, till at last it dawned upon him that Daisy knew no more of a book when she had finished it than when she began, and this not from stupidity, but from careless indifference to everything that did not offer her the physical excitement which she craved. When this

fact did dawn upon him, he gave up his self-imposed task, and told Mrs. Walsh that he believed a woman's hand would be more efficacious in directing Daisy's studies; and commissioned his friend to look out for some place where Daisy could be put under the charge of some unimpeachable people, who would look after and carefully improve her.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BEAUTY MAN.

MEANWHILE other guests had arrived at Goring Place: a Mrs. Levinge and her two daughters, old friends of Walter's, who had been kind to him in Rome long before he was a man of property and could suspect them of having designs upon him. Not that he was addicted to this form of conceit even now that he was a man of property, but then he had married lady friends without daughters who were. Mrs. Walsh endured the Levings gracefully, but she did not particularly like them. The elder of the two daughters, Mary, had worked laboriously, and with some not utterly unimportant results, in a sculptor's studio for the last ten years. She adored her art, and thought that there was nothing of any worth in comparison with it; constant association with men, who saw in her the artist more than the woman,

had rendered her a little more free and outspoken, and gentlemanly altogether, than Mrs. Walsh found good. Not that Mary Levinge was what is called a fast girl, or woman rather, for girlhood was past with her; but she was a frank, independent-minded and mannered woman; a little too concentrated on her art to give time or thought to the cultivation and display of the more purely feminine characteristics. Yet withal not a hard woman; only a bold-hearted, earnest, clear-thinking one, who had found in work a panacea for an early woe—a quickly dispelled illusion—which had been so deeply felt and mourned at the time that it had left her incapable of ever so feeling and mourning again. Love was over for her, in fact, but life was not; and so she heartily enjoyed the latter, and her art, and the warm friendship of many men, after a bonny bright fashion that Mrs. Walsh declared “was not at all feminine.”

The second daughter was endured by the majority of people for the sake of the gentle mother and the “thorough” elder sister. Truth to tell, Miss Sybil Levinge was held to be “a great humbug” generally. She, too, “had her line,” and she pursued it eagerly. She was a “woman’s rights

woman,"—a correspondent of all the "Social Science" journals,—and a terrible person altogether. She regarded her sister as a waster of good marble and time ; she preached a crusade against the love of beauty, avowing it to be an enfeebling, enervating thing ; and parted her hair on one side, and wore a jacket and stand-up collar like a man's, in order to avoid all risk of enfeebling and enervating so much of the world as looked upon her. Some people averred that the precaution was an utterly unnecessary one ; but this may have been dictated by mere spleen. However this may be, Sybil Levinge was not popular, either with men or women. To Mrs. Walsh she was simply repulsive ; while to Daisy she was a being before whom it was nice, for the sake of effects of contrast, to be very gentle and feminine, and delicately graceful in all her movements. As for Walter, he regarded her as the one drawback to Mary's society,—that was all.

There was a brother of the Levingses somewhere in the background. A man of whom his own family apparently knew very little. Walter Goring had seen him once in the old days in Rome, when he (the brother) had come to his mother's house ; and all the inhabitants thereof had knelt down and

worshipped him. All at least but Mary, who had laughed good-humouredly at the grand airs he gave himself, and declared him to be "a good fellow enough, but incorrigibly lazy." "His handsome face—and a commission in the army which he was promised, and never got, poor boy, has been his bane," she had said once to Walter; "he always declares his career was spoilt,—and so won't do anything: as if a man had any chance of a 'career' in the army in these piping times of peace," she had continued, contemptuously.

In the days in which she had said this to him, Walter Goring had sometimes found it a difficult matter to live like a gentleman; therefore the question had risen naturally to his lips:—

"What does he do, then;—how does he manage? Raving against a blight in one's career doesn't feed and clothe a man in these days."

"I don't know how he manages sometimes," she replied gravely; "very hardly—very badly, I'm afraid. He has about three hundred a year, and with that he contrives to quiet his creditors. It's very sad to think about, Walter; for my brother Laurence had the elements of something widely different to what he is, in him."

From the day of this conversation with the light-hearted, honest, out-spoken woman, who found "enough in life" in chipping out her own fair ideas in marble, to the date of the Levingses coming to visit him at Goring Place, Walter had never given a thought to this brother. But when he saw the mother and her daughters there, he remembered the missing link; and asked Mrs. Levinge "Where her son was; and if she thought he would join them?"

"He's at Baden-Baden, now—he's rather out of health," the mother replied.

"He will come fast enough, if you ask him; but perhaps it will be better to leave him at Baden-Baden, in order that his health may be thoroughly re-established," Mary said, significantly.

Then Mrs. Levinge sighed.

"We have not seen each other for a long time."

And that sigh decided Walter.

"I'll write and invite him at once," he said; and the smiles of the old lady, who had been like a mother to him in Rome, blinded him to the expression of regret on the face of the daughter.

Those were very pleasant days at Goring Place. September was upon them by the time things were

tolerably in order; and September in dear old Norfolk is passing fair. The master of Goring Place was a man of mark in that county-side, let him be what he might individually. But Walter had the elements of popularity, more than that of being well liked and highly thought of in his own person and character; and so he was a man of great mark, indeed; and the county distinguished him greatly, and sought him much. He brought a breath of new life amongst them; for he was a man who had won a name, and created for himself interests in a vastly different sphere. His house promised to be the resort of more amusing people than ever the majority of his brother county magnates had witnessed gathered together in the country before. Moreover he was young, sufficiently handsome, wealthy, and in a capital position. No wonder the county thought kind things of him, for in that land were many daughters.

When September set in, and with it shooting-parties, the day life of some of the lady-guests at Goring Place was a trifle duller than before. Walter was an enthusiastic sportsman, and the game had been well preserved; so that he was about in the stubble and turnip fields of the home-farm and

land adjoining for many hours every day. During these hours, Daisy practised singing assiduously, away from all the rest, in her own sitting-room; and Mrs. Walsh and Mary Levinge drove about in a little pony-chaise, and were dull.

But the evenings made up for the comparative barrenness of the days. The gardens had always been kept up well; and now, under the new rule, they seemed to be in fuller perfection than before. The croquet-ground was a marvellous croquet-ground, considering how new it was; and they always found two or three good players amongst the men who came home to dine at Goring Place, after shooting with its owner all day. When darkness fell, and croquet could be no longer played, it was always agreeable to two or three of the party at least to wander about in the gardens; and for the rest, who preferred the lounges in the drawing-room, there was Daisy's voice.

It was even more agreeable when Laurence Levinge came. He had not at all the air of a man addicted to reviling his fate, or indeed of thinking it anything save a particularly enviable and agreeable one. He came straight away from Baden-Baden, immediately on receipt of Walter's letter, in

a most accommodating way ; and they were all—save perhaps his sister Mary—uncommonly glad that he did so, for he infused new life and interest into the gathering.

He was as handsome as a star. Wonderfully handsome, with wavy golden hair, dark-grey eyes fringed with long black lashes, and a face that might have been cut in a cameo, it was so classically correct. A marvellous face, in its tender grace and perfect beauty : a face that expressed such worlds of feeling, eyes that spoke such volumes of passion, even when their owner was but asking for a cup of tea.

He was an idle, but withal an accomplished, young Apollo. He despised his sisters, and his sisters' work—gracefully deriding the elder one for not having demolished Miss Hosmer, and the younger one for not having distinguished herself as much as Miss Faithful. He had no sympathy with women who tried to “do anything save look pretty and dress tastefully, and sing,” he said ; and Daisy heard him say it, and Daisy liked him for the speech.

He had a voice, and a guitar,—the former is frequently a curse to a man, and the latter to his friends. But neither was considered in the light of other than a boon at Goring Place. Daisy and he

sang together constantly, and the evenings were pleasanter than ever for all parties; for the incidentals improved their minds with the two Levings, and Walter's hands not being so full, he had more time at his disposal and that of his sympathetic-souled goddess. Altogether the evenings were pleasanter even than those which they had passed before Laurence Levinge left Baden-Baden.

Soon a change was wrought in the morning's programme. Mr. Levinge paid great court to the grand beauty, and told her it was a great mistake, and worthy of awkward-souled Englishmen, to remove themselves from female influence, and go after the partridges, as they did for hours alone daily.

"If you can propose a remedy we will try it," she replied, graciously; "but bear one thing in mind, it must not be at the cost of giving up your sport. Men in the house all day are a bore."

"But couldn't you come and reward our feats of prowess and skill by bringing us our luncheon? I'll arrange it. Mary and you shall drive down to some sylvan glade, near to the scene of our last shots, before one o'clock each day; by that means we shall combine pic-nic and partridge-shooting,—

the sole outdoor amusements that are indigenous to the land of my birth."

"I agree to it, Mr. Levinge; and you shall sing to us under green trees, if you will."

But he had an aversion to making himself ridiculous; so, feeling that a guitar and a shooting-jacket did not go well together, he declined pleasuring her in this one particular. Then she said—

"You have provided for Miss Levinge and myself; how about your sister Sybil and Miss Goring?"

"My sister Sybil is out of place in any fresh or natural situation; let her sit at home and pour out her desires for her sex making itself odious at five shillings a column. As for Miss Daisy, can't she come with you on horseback, if she mustn't be left behind?"

"You know she never is left behind," Mrs. Walsh replied, coldly; "Mr. Goring makes his ward of due account."

"Or undue account! Well, it's his whim to do so; therefore I suppose we may take it for granted that the Daisy must not be left out in any of our small schemes. At any rate you'll help me to bear the burden and heat of the days that are to come in the turnip-fields, won't you?"

“If Mr. Goring finds the plan good I shall see no objection to it; I have nothing else to do all the mornings,” she replied. She meant to make the concession, to grant the favour he asked of her; but she did not want to make it too flattering to him. He was agreeable enough, and had a great air of devotion. But she knew that Walter Goring was worth a hundred of Laurence Levinge.

For awhile,—it was late one afternoon when this conversation took place,—he lounged on a rug at the feet of his sister Mary and Mrs. Walsh. He reclined with his hands clasped under his head and his face upturned towards them. It was a wonderful face! His sister felt the wonderful beauty of it, and took mental notes concerning it—notes which she resolved to turn to account when she got back to the dear old studio in Rome. And Mrs. Walsh looked down into it also, and thought that, even were she free, that was not the face which she should care to see bowing before her shrine! But she sat in a very easy chair, and he misunderstood her. When he rose, it was to saunter into the conservatory and get a pale buff rose, which Miss Goring wore at dinner.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STORM AT GORING PLACE.

ALL this time there had been no communication worth mentioning between the inhabitants of The Hurst and Goring Place. About a fortnight after Walter had come down with the Walshes a gentleman had ridden up, and, hearing that "Master was out," had left a stalwart card bearing the name of "Mr. H. Omry Fellowes;" and three days after this, Walter had ridden over to The Hurst and left his card. But there intercourse had ended.

Mr. H. Omry Fellowes's visit proved one thing, and that was, that the right-of-way question, which had been a vexed one with the last generation, was not going to stand in the way of his friendship with the new-comer. Mr. Goring was very glad of this, when he thought of it at all; for all men's tongues wagged in praise of "Fellowes of The Hurst." "He was a thoroughly good fellow," everybody

said; "it was only a pity that he didn't marry, and send things along a bit faster at The Hurst than he could do under the supervision of his mother and maiden sister;" both of whom were sternly set against innovation of every sort, and were consequently not reputed lively. At last Walter Goring wrote and asked his neighbour at The Hurst to give them the pleasure of his company at a battue they were going to have in a certain famous cover on the Goring Place estate. For answer he received a message from Miss Fellowes to the effect that "her brother was staying at Brighton."

Walter's efforts to educate and improve Daisy had ceased utterly. For his own part he would have been well content to take her as she was socially—he found her very charming; but he felt strongly that something must be done for her, or his conscience would not acquit him of having, in a measure, been false to the important trust which his uncle had reposed in him. In fact, he made up his mind that, when this party broke up, Daisy must be sent somewhere to be guarded safe and sure for four years. Then! God only knew what would become of her and him.

The guest, Laurence Levinge, was but a very little way behind the host in popular opinion. For all his delicate beauty, and, at first sight, rather slight and effeminate appearance, he was a keen sportsman—a splendid shot—a daring rider—a first-rate cricketer. At first, when the country gentlemen met him in Walter Goring's drawing-room; when they saw him lounging about on big rugs like a lazy boy of the south, and heard him singing impassioned songs in a language they could not understand to the tinkling of a guitar: when they saw and heard these things, at first they were tempted to despise him. But when they saw the manner in which he brought his birds down; when they marked that no number of turnip-fields fatigued him; above all, when they saw the way in which he handled a refractory colt, to the purchase of which Walter had committed himself, they altered their opinion of Laurence Levinge. Altogether, what with his singing and his shooting, and his style in general, as exhibited both to men and women, Mr. Levinge was in excellent repute in and around Goring Place.

At last one morning, when Walter was in the gun-room, with his belt on his shoulder and his

pointers at his feet, waiting for Laurence to come and pick up his piece and go out with him, Mary Levinge came into the room.

“Where’s Laurence?” she asked.

“I don’t know; I’m waiting for him.”

“Walter,” she began quietly, “you and I have always talked to one another as two human beings, unhampered by the reflection that they are of opposite sexes, may talk. I hardly know why I have hesitated to say to you before that I’m sorry you asked my brother here, but I *have* hesitated; he’s an unscrupulous man (I fear) about women.”

“What makes you say this to me, now?” he asked, hurriedly.

“This—he sings too often and too sweetly to your ward, and——” she paused, and her frank face was flooded with colour as she went on, “and he would never marry her under any circumstances, therefore his songs are bad for her.”

“But, Mary, she sees nothing of him save when Mrs. Walsh and you are with her; and as to his songs,” he proceeded, with a little twinge of jealousy, “they’re principally directed to Mrs. Walsh.”

Miss Levinge shook her head.

“In reality, I do observe these things so very little,” she said, earnestly; “but I had a feeling against Laurence coming here from the first. It seems a bad thing to say, for his presence always gives my poor mother the purest pleasure. Young girls are not given to over caution, remember; and Laurence is not one to be tender to carelessness. My brother has a very winning exterior, and a very cold heart; don’t test Daisy too hard. Here he comes.”

Almost as she spoke, Laurence sauntered into the gun-room. He smiled with his eyes a little superciliously when he saw his sister, and asked,—

“What, Mary! has your stay at Goring Place revived your old taste for fire-arms?”

She looked at him steadily, not scornfully at all; but down upon him, as though he were something infinitely weaker than herself.

“Had I ever the taste? I’d forgotten it.”

“What brought you here, then? Goring, you don’t seem to have a corner in the house that’s sacred from the women—at least, from those who have emancipated themselves. Mrs. Walsh and your cousin do know when we have had enough of them.”

“Scarcely civil to your sister,” Mary said, laughing. Then she left them, and went in search of Mrs. Walsh, whom she found alone in the drawing-room.

“Has Laurence been here, Mrs. Walsh?” she asked; and Mrs. Walsh replied,—

“No; I think he has been out all the morning with Mr. Goring:” and Mary Levinge was strengthened in her conviction.

That night Walter broached the subject to Mrs. Walsh.

“Have you observed anything with Daisy and Levinge?”

“With Daisy and Levinge?” she repeated after him, in unfeigned surprise. “No.”

“Mary was speaking to me about them this morning.”

“Rather premature and uncalled-for interference on her part, I think,” Mrs. Walsh remarked. “What did she say?”

“Oh! she only fancied that he was rather attentive to Daisy. I hardly know what she said, but the drift of her observations was, that I had been injudicious in bringing them together.”

Mrs. Walsh laughed; it did seem very absurd to

her that Mr. Levinge should be accused of breathing or meaning soft nothings to Daisy Goring.

“He never pays her the slightest attention,” she said, decidedly; and Walter whispered,

“He makes up for it then by paying plenty of it to you; doesn’t he now, confess?” and in his anxiety to get a confession from Mrs. Walsh, he forgot Daisy for a time.

The usual arrangement when they went out for long drives was, that Mrs. Walsh was seated in front with Walter, and Daisy and Laurence Levinge were perched on behind, together. But it was a very luxurious kind of trap—a phaeton dog-cart in fact—and Laurence was accustomed to lounge in it with much ease and grace; with rather too much ease Walter thought, sometimes, for Mr. Levinge made it convenient to lean over and monopolise a larger share of Mrs. Walsh’s attention than belonged to him by right. On these occasions, however, it was satisfactory to observe that Daisy was very blithe and self-possessed, quite as much so as when her cavalier returned to his allegiance. On the whole, Walter felt that dear honest Mary had been mistaken.

They made themselves tolerably well acquainted

with the county in this way, driving long distances in the afternoon, dining, and returning in the cool of the evening. Occasionally the dinners that they got under these circumstances were terrible mistakes,—country inns, as might be expected, falling very far short of the Goring Place cuisine. But the drives home in the cool evenings more than compensated for this; they one and all agreed that “there was no mistake about the drives.”

It was a lazy, beautiful time. The women and the weather were both so fair, that no wonder Walter declared that after each return he felt as if he had finished another canto of a poem. How Mr. Walsh and the Levings felt was not mentioned. Equally satisfied, perhaps, for they had, as Laurence said, “a great pull on the others in the matter of dinners.” It was a happy, lazy, beautiful time; quite an operatic air was thrown over it frequently, by Daisy’s and Mr. Levinge’s voices, as they drove rapidly along at night through some of those solitary, unfrequented Norfolk roads. Visitors in country houses, that stood a little way back from the road, and were unseen in the darkness, often rubbed their eyes and fancied they must be dream-

ing, when bits of *Faust* came floating upon their ears, sung in a style that was a staggering surprise down there. Daisy gloried in the "jewel song;" to tell the truth, she was much given to singing it before her glass, and going through all the business in a way that closely resembled Adelina Patti's. Mr. Levinge told her that no *Faust*—not even Mephistopheles himself—would have left her, had she been the Marguerite; and Daisy listened to the flattery and sang the song over again more joyously than before.

At last Mary Levinge told Walter that she had heard of a lady at Brighton, the widow of a clergyman, who would be glad to take charge of Daisy. The lady was a Mrs. Osborne, and she had a daughter about Daisy's age, who would share Daisy's studies. They were people of assured respectability, and, Miss Levinge added, "from what I gather from the friend who writes to me about it, Daisy won't be dull there, and will be safe."

"It's all very delightful, and you're a dear good creature, Mary," Walter replied; "the only drawback to it is the telling her that she's to go."

"She knows very well that she can't stay here when Mrs. Walsh and the rest of us leave; there-

fore, the sooner she knows when she's to go and where she's to go, the better," Mary urged.

"No doubt—all the same, the telling her won't be pleasant," Walter replied, and he was right; the telling her was far from pleasant.

He deferred the evil day until there was a talk one morning of the Walshes being compelled to return to town for a short time; then he took the plunge. He followed Daisy straight away from the breakfast-table to her own sitting-room, and when she looked up at him in surprise at his presence there at that hour, he commenced at once.

"Daisy, can you be ready to start with Mrs. Walsh if she goes the day after to-morrow, do you think? I want to take you to Brighton for a time, and it will be better for us to go up as far as London with the Walshes."

"Yes. I can be ready; but—you don't mean to leave me at Brighton by myself, do you?"

"Certainly not. You'll be with some very nice people—the Osbornes—and I shall see you often."

She heaved a great sigh, and sat half round on her chair, clasping her arms over the back of it, and leaning her face down upon them.

"Daisy, you're not crying?"

There was no answer, but he knew that she was crying ; and a malefactor's sensations are agreeable in comparison with his, as he felt himself the cause of those tears.

"You must see, dear, that this must be," he said, tenderly. In spite of his clear-sightedness as to her follies and shortcomings, he was getting very fond of this girl. Of what nature the fondness was he could not determine yet ; but he was conscious that it was an increasing fondness and a genuine one.

"I don't see that it must be at all," she sobbed ; "here at my age to be sent away from my only home and my only friend to some old harridan of a woman, who'll drive me mad. I thought wards always lived with their guardians. I thought guardians were the proper people to look after their wards."

"If I were older——" he began, but she interrupted him to say,

"Oh, stuff and nonsense, Walter. If you were older very likely I shouldn't care to stay. As it is, if you are to be like a brother to me, as you once said you would be, there can be no place so proper for me as Goring Place. If I'm ever to feel that you're my brother and best friend and guardian,

you mustn't try to teach me that there can be any harm in my staying here with you alone."

"That's not the point, you little casuist. There would be no harm in it, Heaven knows; but I can't have it questioned even. Don't think all the pain of parting will be on your side. I shall miss you, Daisy."

He spoke very tenderly, but she only gnawed abstractedly at the back of her hand, as it rested upon the chair, and gazed steadfastly at the floor. He repeated the last part of his sentence,

"Don't you think I shall miss you, Daisy?"

"Oh, yes! I dare say—I mean yes, dear Walter; but you won't hurry me off, just because Mrs. Walsh is going. Let me wait till the party breaks up."

"The Levinges are going soon. No, no, it will be better for you to travel up with Mrs. Walsh."

"I feel as if you were turning me out. I never wanted to be brought here: it's too hard that I should be turned out."

"Now you talk like a child," he said, gravely.

"Walter," she lifted her head and spoke very rapidly, "if there are only two or three dull women at this place where you're going to put me, I shall go mad."

“Nonsense! You shall have the chestnut, Daisy. When you feel the blue devils coming on, try a gallop on the downs.”

“But in the house—in the house with dull women, after having been so happy here. Walter, how *can* you do it?”

She began to sob aloud now, raining her tears down in big clear drops, as a child does. Once more he was oppressed with the malefactor’s sensations.

“Daisy, you distress me cruelly, and I know the whole time that I’m almost as childish as yourself to be distressed by such folly.”

“It’s your Mrs. Walsh has made you do this. I know it; she hates me.”

“You know very well that Mrs. Walsh has nothing whatever to do with it,” he said, angrily. He began to feel that as a guardian he was in a very undignified position; his ward was putting him on his defence in a most extraordinary way.

“Then it’s his sister.”

“Whose sister?”

“It’s that Miss Levinge: she hates me too.”

“Feeling that they all hate you, I wonder that you care to stay with them any longer.”

Daisy cleared up and laughed.

"I rather like it, for I know the reason why," she said simply. "Mrs. Walsh isn't so anxious to see me safely out of this house from pure love of me; there, dear cousin Walter—don't be angry with me—I'm only vexed with her because I'm afraid you like her better than you do me."

She got up and clasped her hands over his shoulder, and bent her head down till it rested on his breast: and it would have been difficult to decide whether it was pure friendship, or brotherly love, or something else, which made him press her closely to him for an instant, touch her forehead with his lips, and then put her away from him hastily, as he answered—

"If I didn't like you so well, my darling, perhaps I shouldn't be so anxious to send you away from me."

Whatever the feeling which had actuated the speech and gesture, certain it is that his heart had throbbed violently while making them; that he had been unable to suppress, but every other sign of emotion he had sedulously hidden from her.

When he left her, he took two or three turns by himself, in the corridor, before he rejoined his

friends below. He needed a little time to himself, in order to take a careful survey of the dangers against which it most behoved him to be on guard, should another storm arise. For, though Daisy had not been so tempestuous as he had anticipated she would have been, he was conscious that there had been a storm at Goring Place.

“By Jove, I mustn’t get fond of the girl; yet,” he muttered to himself, “for her own sake and mine too, I shall be glad when she’s gone, for she *has* a fascination, though my goddess can’t see it. Mary must have been mistaken about her brother: the Daisy could never play a double part.”

The Daisy meanwhile was crouching on her sofa, sobbing and crying as if her heart would break. The poor, fair, little girl’s grief was genuine enough, whatever the cause of it. There seemed to be no light in heaven or earth for her. She was going away from all the joy of her life to Brighton and black misery.

“Just a little longer—if Walter would only let me stay a little longer, it would be all right,” she moaned aloud. “It’s that Mrs. Walsh, I know. Won’t I make her smart going up.”

CHAPTER XV.

A TURNING POINT IN THE ROAD!

THERE was no reprieve for Daisy. The Walshes were obliged to go up to town two days after Walter had mooted the Brighton plan to his cousin. They were obliged to go up, but they intended returning shortly ; which fact no one thought worth mentioning to Miss Goring.

Those two last days were very miserable ones. Daisy adopted an air of injured rectitude and resignation to wrong that shook Walter's faith in the wisdom of his own design several times. "Cursed be the social forms that err from honest Nature's rule !" There was a lack of broad human justice, he half believed, in his banishing this young girl from what she had herself piteously declared to be her only home and her only friend.

The morning came, and the hour for starting

arrived. They had sat longer than usual at the breakfast-table, because it was not worth while to rise up and seek for something fresh to do before the carriage came round. So they were still seated at the wrecks of the morning feast when the crunching of wheels in front of the house announced that the hour was come.

Mrs. Walsh got up and handed one light travelling cloak to her husband, and a black Russian-leather bag to Walter, and then proceeded to take leave. She shook hands with Mrs. and the Misses Levinge as the majority of women do shake hands with the majority of their own sex ; and then she turned and extended her hand to Laurence Levinge as a boon or a blessing, and he took it and bent over it as a devotee over a relic, a mother over her child, or anyone over anything that is most loved and valued. If this woman was a flirt at all, she was a Queen of Flirts, and she never came off her throne for any man save her husband—and my hero.

It was Daisy's turn next. She looked like a white rabbit with her pale face and her red eyes, as she went the round rapidly, just saying " Good-bye," and hastily extending a slim hand to each, which, as soon as it was touched, she even more hastily with-

drew. At least she strove to make this the whole of her farewells; but some maternal instinct animated Mrs. Levinge, and she drew the sorrowful, angry, pale face down, and kissed it with a "God bless you, my child!"

While his mother had been doing this, Mr. Levinge moved into the doorway; so it was in passing out into the hall that Daisy took her leave of him, and no one saw it. Then he went out and helped both ladies into the carriage, and spoke a few words to Walter about using the horses while the latter was away; but his eyes never met Daisy's once, and Daisy looked both sad and savage.

When the carriage drove off, Laurence Levinge returned to the dining-room, and joined his mother and sisters at the window. Suddenly, as the turn in the drive concealed the ones who were going from their view, he laid his hand on Mary's arm and whispered to her alone.

"It's much better that she should go. I don't know what I might have been let in for if she had stayed."

"Do you mean that? Are you speaking the truth?" she replied.

"Yes, on my honour I am," he answered; and he

was at the time. Despite his long grey eyes, his idleness, and his exceeding beauty, it was not the business of his life to look about seeking whom he might devour. When he wrought evil, he wrought it as most men do in real life—unpremeditatedly: in fact, “’twas want of thought”—the old story !

The fresh morning air, combined with the utter inability youth has of being very miserable for long about anything, told on Daisy before they had been an hour in the train; and then she began to put her plan of making Mrs. Walsh smart into execution. They had the carriage to themselves, which circumstance favoured her considerably. First, she commenced a light fire of allusions to what Walter had said to her “the other day, you know, when you came and sat with me in the morning.” Now Mrs. Walsh had not heard of this visit to Daisy’s special domain which Walter had paid; therefore at the first mention of it, she did prick up her ears. This Daisy observed, and, fired by her success, she made some bolder strokes. “Dear Walter, *when* did you say you’d come to Brighton?”

“I don’t think I fixed any time,” Walter replied. He could not remember having said anything about

it; but Daisy seemed to think he had, and to find pleasure in the thought.

“Oh! you did, Walter; Mrs. Walsh, isn't it a shame that those Miss Levingses should have more of him than you and I?” She put her beautiful, flexible, intelligent-looking hand on his arm as she spoke; and Walter, though he knew Mrs. Walsh would strongly disapprove of it all, could not do other than take the hand in his, and press it kindly. In answer to Daisy's remark, Mrs. Walsh merely moved her head round slowly one half inch, in order to look more fully at her audacious interrogator. Daisy was feeling almost happy by this time; she put her head back a little, and met Mrs. Walsh's bright cold eyes defiantly with her own impertinent ones of cobalt blue.

“Shall we keep him between us, Mrs. Walsh—keep him constantly at Roehampton and Brighton? Let me see, how much of him shall I graciously give up to you?”

“You silly child,” Walter muttered—and yet, though he called her “silly,” he was not ill pleased.

“No, I'm not,” Daisy replied; “you're to be everything to me, you know. Remember our compact.”

When she said that, she had the felicity of seeing

Mrs. Walsh give Walter a reproachful, almost an indignant, look. Daisy did not know how this might act upon him, so she determined to retire gracefully from the contest while there could be no doubt as to her being victor. Accordingly she took her hand away from his, and turned round to look for a landmark in the country they were passing through, so that when she came back she might know every now and then exactly how far she was from dear old Goring Place.

They parted at the Shoreditch Station: the Walshes were bound for home, Walter and his charge for Brighton.

"You'll stay at Brighton to-night, I suppose?" Mrs. Walsh said to him when he was shaking hands with her.

"Probably."

"But you'll be up to-morrow?"

"Yes, most assuredly."

"Then come to us, won't you?"

"I will, and I hope to find that Ralph will be free to go back to Goring Place at once."

She bent her head forward a little.

"You know how truly I am your friend. Are you in love with your cousin, or not?"

"No—I don't know," he said, laughing. "Time enough to think of that."

"There's not time enough; she hasn't a particle of real feeling; she will love one man as soon as another. In fact, she'll never care for any one but herself; but she'll make you think she cares for *you* in a very short time. Now do be careful, sir," and she held up a warning finger to him, partly in sport, but a great deal more in earnest.

"She's generally right, and she's always the dearest creature in the world," Walter thought when they had separated and he was alone with his cousin; "but I think she's wrong about the Daisy."

The Daisy and he had not at all a bad time of it going down to Brighton. She was very sisterly and very sweet; she gave way to no expressions of pettishness or wilfulness. She promised to "make the best of things at the Osbornes'." She adored him—verbally—for having given her the chestnut. She took a most astounding turn, and declared Mrs. Walsh to be "as nice as she was beautiful." She spoke of her dead father in an altered strain that touched Walter immensely. "I've been so much better about him. I've thought so much more kindly of him since I knew you, Walter," she said.

"I was a little fiend that night you came to me first. But then I had no one to love, and no one to love me. I have found some one since," she added, in almost a whisper. Finally, as they were nearing Brighton, she startled him by asking suddenly, "And what is to become of me when I can't stay at these Osbornes' any longer? It isn't to be my home for life, I suppose? Where am I to go next?"

"I can't tell you yet, Daisy. I must not tell you yet. Your home for life? No, no!"

"For how many years, then? Oh! do tell me."

"Perhaps for two or three—perhaps for a little longer. I can't tell you, dear; don't ask me."

"For two or three years?" she cried; "I shall never stand it." And then she lapsed into tears and declarations of perfect indifference as to what became of her, if she was to be left with "odious women for two or three years."

It was in vain that Walter placed before her the possibility of their not being odious; equally in vain was it to point out to her the admiration excited by "her own horse," when the chestnut was taken out at the station. Daisy wept herself into

the semblance of a white rabbit, and refused to be comforted.

Mrs. Osborne lived in a detached villa just out of the town—a pretty house, with clematis, and jasmine, and rose-bushes, and ear-wigs climbing all over it. She and her daughter received Daisy warmly and kindly; and Daisy eyed them resentfully and somewhat scornfully, as became their respective positions. The elder lady satisfied Walter thoroughly as to her entire fitness for the task she had taken upon herself; and he satisfied her thoroughly as to the manner in which he would recompense her for her trouble. And while the elders were arranging matters, the daughter of the house strove to ingratiate herself with Daisy, and failed ignominiously in doing so.

When Walter Goring was going away, Daisy made her last request.

“You’ll come and see me to-morrow, Walter?”

“Yes, for half-an-hour, dear. I must be in town by two o’clock.”

“Oh, Walter! no, don’t; if you’ll only stay and ride with me to-morrow evening, I will settle beautifully; but I won’t else?”

She felt convinced that Mrs. Walsh had asked

him to go back, and she did sigh to show Mrs. Walsh that she too had a little influence.

“Daisy, dear, I want to see my publisher to-morrow; I can’t stay till the evening. Go for your ride; you’ll enjoy it just as much without me.”

She clasped her hands over his shoulders as she had done the other morning at Goring Place. He did not press her to his heart this time, because Mrs. and Miss Osborne were in the room—trying not to look at them—but he felt strongly inclined to do so.

“It’s only one day I ask you to give me, Walter; do, do, do.”

She bent her head down for one moment, and let it touch his shoulder as she made her plea. He could have made no other answer than he did.

“I will, my darling.”

Then he said good-bye, and walked away hastily, thinking to himself as he walked, “The little witch nearly sends my resolutions to the devil when she seems so fond of me; if she is really—and remains so—it will be all right in the end: I have only to see a little more of her to settle my business.”

The next morning he spent partly in the villa garden with Daisy, and partly in Mrs. Osborne’s

drawing-room, where Daisy sang to him ; and in the evening he got the best horse a livery-stable could supply, and went for a ride with his cousin. They started about half an hour before Mr. Fellowes and Charlie St. John went out for that ride in the middle of which we left them several chapters back.

It will be remembered that when we parted from them, Mr. Fellowes had just taken the dangerous leap which all men must take sooner or later, however averse they may be to it. He had asked a girl to be his wife ; and the girl was on the point of giving her answer. Perhaps, though, exception will be taken to this statement. The hypercritical may aver that he had not asked her to be his wife ; that he had, in fact, only asked her to give him permission to indulge in the sketchy pleasure of loving her all his life. But this with him meant everything, and she knew it. To all intents and purposes he had asked her to marry him. But she paused, being doubtful—not of him or of his meaning—but of herself ; and he, thinking that he had not made himself sufficiently clear, went on.

“ Don’t you think I should make you happy, Charlie ? Before Heaven, if you only take me, I’ll

try all my life with all my heart; I may not have shown the love I have for you as many men would; but no man could love you better, my pet."

His hand was on her wrist still; strong and stalwart as he was, his touch was tender as a woman's; it must have been a very good love that so softened him. She felt that it must be this; she remembered the arid life that was before her if she refused—the hopeless prospect; she remembered his constant care of her—his kindness. There was the genuine ring of the metal about his pleading now. All these things flashed through her mind in a moment, and she said—

"If you think I shall make you happy—I'll try."

"God bless you, my darling!" he whispered, but he did not seal the compact after the manner of lovers who take the leap in a drawing-room when no one is near; and she thanked the kind star of her destiny that he did not do so, for before his whispered thanks were well uttered they turned into a lovely little bit of road, and there she saw—What!

Such a picture—such a scene. She never forgot it. Its beauty, its painfulness, its mystery, its poetry, were all stamped in indelible colours on

her mind in the first moment in which she looked upon it. That undefinable sensation of having seen all this and felt all this before, either in a dream or in a pre-existent state, came over her, as Mr. Fellowes moved his hand from her wrist, and they rode on and looked upon this scene.

High overhead the trees met in a grand natural arch, shutting out nearly all view of the sky for a considerable length of road,—all view of the sky, but not of the sun. To the west the trees were flooded as it were with light; each leaf seemed tipped with radiance, and golden fragments fell down shimmering on the ground with every movement of the branches overhead. While towards them—from the other end of this nave of nature, over the rich yellow loamy road on which the fragments of gold fell shimmering in the fullest light that the setting sun could throw upon them—there came another pair of riders: and the one was a fair yellow-haired girl on a splendid chestnut horse, whose every movement brought out some graceful curve in her figure; and the man was the same who some weeks before had told Charlie St. John, that even for women there were paths to be trodden and goals to be gained that were well worth treading

and gaining. And her heart sank down with a dull thud, as she bent her head in acknowledgment of Walter Goring's bow, and remembered fully and clearly, and for the first time since her fever, all Walter Goring's suggestions and advice. There had been another life for her, had she sought it. There had been a means of escape from the mean monotony which so sorely weighted her. But she had been oblivious of them; and now!—now it was too late!

CHAPTER XVI.

A PROUD CAPTIVE.

“Do you know that man? Who is he?” Mr. Fellowes asked, as soon as they were past.

“I just know him; it’s Mr. Walter Goring, the author of ——.”

“Is it?” he interrupted eagerly. “Why, he’s just come into a fine property down close to my place. I never saw him before”—and Mr. Fellowes turned round and leant his hand on his horse’s haunch in order the better to have another look at his unknown neighbour.

“Good-looking fellow?” he observed, interrogatively, when he came round again; and Charlie replied dreamily—

“Is he?”

He looked at her anxiously. They were out of the shade of the trees by this time; and in the light

he saw that her face was very pale, and that a shade had come over her eyes.

“What is it, Charlie?” he asked pathetically. “You don’t regret——” he stopped, and gave a gulp. It was very much to this man that the girl to whom he had told his love should love him in return.

“No, no; please don’t say that to me again,” she said, quickly turning her face towards him. “I’ll tell you what it was, though it’s almost too intangible to tell at all,” she went on in a low voice, half to herself.

“Do tell me, Charlie; you must tell me everything that troubles you now, my pet.”

She looked kindly and gratefully at him. At the same time she rather doubted her own capability of doing this. He was not the type of man to whom a woman can carry every trouble. However, she said now—

“It is nothing that troubles me; it only set me thinking. I’m sure that I have been through that bit of road, and seen the same people, and heard the same words, and spoken the same before.”

“I hope not,” he said seriously. He could not help thinking that it would be rather awkward for

him if she had done so. An accepted rival, and that rival a duplicate of himself, might prove disagreeable.

She laughed. "Oh, it must have been in a dream, or in some other life," she said; "it gives you a very queer feeling when it comes over you—you don't know what is and what is not."

"It's the fever has left you weak," he said, encouragingly. He was very matter-of-fact. Without having precisely what Mr. Sala calls "beef on the brain," he had too much solidity there for there to be any room for metaphysical speculations. He meant most kindly towards Charlie by this suggestion of his. Kindly?—he meant it most fondly and lovingly: but at the moment she would have preferred a silent sympathy,—anything, anything, rather than this sort of solution of her dreamy difficulty. However, she said—

"I suppose it is that I am very weak indeed; so weak that I really don't think I can stand Robert and Ellen's speeches to-night; will you mind not saying anything about it till to-morrow?"

But, unlike the majority of men, he did mind deferring the annunciation of the bliss that had befallen him till the morrow. He did mind it very

much indeed. He wanted to make his full rights apparent at once, in order that he might claim them without fear and without reproach. So he said that he thought that it would be more honourable to make Mr. Prescott acquainted with what had passed without any unnecessary delay. To which Charlie assented with a certain feeling that was not exactly soreness, but that certainly was not pleasure, that she belonged rather less to herself than she had done an hour before.

Unquestionably it was not the courtship—possibly it would not be the marriage—of which the girl had dreamed. We all do dream about our futures; and if they fall very far short of our dreamings, we cannot help coming down to their level with a pang. Young womanhood, too, often inclines to the dangerous and dubious, rather than to the man who proposes an alliance through all time to her after knowing her for three weeks, and leaves her not a single doubt as to the honourableness of his intentions. The creature in the clouds—never too certain of himself—holds her against the man who comes to the fore, and tells her in language about which there can be no mistake, that he wants her to be his wife and the manager of his

household, and the legal recipient of all his ill humours.

During the ride home, Mr. Fellowes made minute jokes against himself; and that feeling of being no longer her own "goods and chattels" came over Charlie more strongly than before. She felt herself constrained to smile at what he said, whether cause for smiling were patent to her or not. She also felt that he was watching her, as she before now had watched a kitten or a puppy. Further: she reminded herself that henceforth all chance of anything different to that which she now had was over for her. That this man's life and interests and her own were one and indivisible through all time from this hour. That in future to sigh for novelty would be half a crime, and more than half a folly. That she was "engaged" to fulfil every atom of a woman's self-abnegating part. That she had shut herself off from all chance of change, and so had better—make the best of it.

She came back from her reverie—a reverie in which she had heard without heeding many of his speeches—just as they were about to re-enter the town. She felt that he deserved something different from the inattention of the last fifteen minutes

before he went in and told her brother-in-law that he desired the great boon of herself.

“Look here,” she said, reining her horse a little closer to his, “as a matter of form, I suppose you will tell Robert Prescott what you have told me; but I want you to understand that all the Robert Prescotts in the world couldn’t alter my decision.”

If he could but have feigned to accept the womanly graciousness of the avowal? But he could not feign; the graceful gift of doing so was not his. He opened his honest blue eyes at her, and said—

“Why, my dear Charlie, he wishes you to marry me. I know that very well.”

Then she took the “Major” sharply on the curb, with a miserable feeling that he (Mr. Fellowes, not the “Major”) never would understand her.

Mr. Fellowes carried himself bravely even through that awful ordeal—a first evening in the bosom of the family of his betrothed. One cannot repress a feeling of reverential admiration for the wild gallantry which carries any man along to this point. The preliminary passages are pleasant enough; all things are made so easy to him by the family while

he is only looking much and saying nothing that can be taken hold of. But from the moment that he has shown that he knows how to offer his paw, he is expected to perform perpetually, and if one of the long roll of an engaged man's tricks is got through tamely, he is commented upon in no very tender spirit by the watchful band of anxious friends. A woman's part of the business is not fraught with too much bliss; but a man's must be maddening.

The Prescotts were very kind—odiously kind. They averted their eyes whenever he went near her, and (Ellen especially) could not restrain their looks of disappointment when he failed to avail himself in any marked manner of the opportunity thus given. Mrs. Prescott told her children to call him “Uncle Henry” from the moment the announcement was made. So that when Charlie came down after taking off her habit, she found him domesticated in a manner that was disgusting to her. Moreover, Mr. Fellowes looked too rosy under his happiness, and smiled too much for good taste. That he should have been hungry at supper-time was all right enough, and quite in accordance with her own sentiments. But he made a merit of his appetite,

as if it were something surprising under the circumstances—a sort of thing worthy of remark. He grew communicative about a spoilt marriage scheme of his sister's; he made jokes about the proverb he had become for being “very hard to hit” down in his own county. He gave himself little airs of ownership with respect to Charlie, telling her what she “should” do on the following day, instead of asking her what she “would” do. Finally, he adverted to that fact of having met Walter Goring out riding, which has been already chronicled. “And he had a remarkably pretty girl with him,” he said, magnanimously. “I dare say we shall soon have her for a neighbour at Goring Place, Charlie!” There is no doubt about it, that when love makes a man hilarious, he should be shut up for a time in the dark. The risk he runs of making himself ridiculous in the light of lamps and love is too great.

As soon as he was gone that night, Charlie said good-night hurriedly, and rushed up to her room. She wanted to think about what she had done before the remarks of any third person had put the deed before her in an evil light. She wanted to think about what she had done. She sadly wanted to get some assurance from herself that she had done well.

She hoped that she had ; she prayed that she had ; she thought that she had ; but she did not know.

From the commercial point of view, she knew that it would be a very good marriage for her. She knew very well that man (or woman, for that matter) does not live by bread alone, in the station of life to which she had been born. She knew very well that she should be a better, a brighter, and more contented wife to a man who had the wherewithal to keep all sordid cares from her than she should be to one who had to struggle and strive to do it, and who must even then fail. She had no romantic notions about love in a cottage, and a platter of potato peelings being all-sufficient, if partaken of in company with the husband of her heart. She knew very well that this was a style of thing which would shortly have sapped the foundations of any love she might ever have felt. But at the same time that she knew all this, she did wonder whether "The Hurst" and a plentiful supply of the good things of this life would be all-sufficient for her through the long years that, in the order of things, were yet to be passed by her in Henry Fellowes's company. Would these be enough for her if Henry Fellowes never got nearer to her

heart than he had yet succeeded in doing? "But he's so good and kind, he *must*," she said to herself; and then she thought "What a life Mr. Goring's wife will have?" for she fell into the error of fancying that this man was more in his books than he was, and his books never palled upon her.

Just then a voice asked from the outside of her door—

"May I come in for two minutes, Charlie?"

"Yes, for just two minutes;" and then the door was thrown open impatiently, and Miss Charlie stood before her gentle, fair, placid sister, with streaming damp hair, and a troubled expression of countenance.

"I thought I would just come and speak to you before I went to bed." Mrs. Prescott said, composedly walking on into the room without giving so much as a glance at the troubled face of the girl who had admitted her.

"What have you to say at this hour of the night, Ellen? You, who generally crush all my conversational efforts after ten o'clock—and it's past midnight now."

"Robert and I have been talking about you."

"Naturally," the girl interrupted, pettishly;

“but put off the recapitulation of what you’ve said till to-morrow—do, please.” She paused for a moment or two, and then she went on. “If you only knew how tired I am to-night, and how my head burns——”

“Does it? La!” her sister said, pityingly.

“Does it?” the girl cried, leaning her arms and face down upon the toilet-table, and upsetting a scent-bottle as she did so; “does it? it does; and my heart and soul are burning too. Now, don’t say anything, or you’ll make me worse.”

Mrs. Prescott gazed for a moment or two at this unruly member of her household; then she glanced up at the gas; the latter was flaring extravagantly, so she paused to turn it down before she said,

“What have you been doing to make your hair in such a state?”

“Dipping my head in water,” her sister replied, jumping to her feet as she spoke. “Come, Ellen, time’s up; you said for two minutes.”

“But, Charlie, do listen; you know how sincerely Robert and I have your good at heart; he says you have been a great flirt, you know, but that now he hopes you will alter, and—and—give Mr. Fellowes no reason to repent his very hasty offer.”

Charlie gave an impatient movement of the shoulders.

"Yes. I have been what's called a flirt, I suppose; that is to say——there, don't talk to me to-night—don't, Ellen, don't."

She put her arms round her sister's neck as she pleaded thus; she pressed her hot crimson cheek against the fair, round, cool one which was never defaced by angry passions. She was very much in earnest in her appeal; but what chance does impassioned earnestness ever stand against dogged determination? Mrs. Prescott was one of those sweetly-amiable women who invariably contrive to have the last word.

"That is to say—what, Charlie?"

"Why, you and Robert have both applied the term to me, and you're always right; but do drop the past now. What is the use of making me feel myself a miserable sinner? Mr. Fellowes is so good and kind—and—all that—to me, that of course I shall be the same to him."

"I hope so, Charlie," the married sister replied; "but you'll have to alter in many things, dear."

"I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks," Charlie said, laughing wearily. "Come, dear, go

now, or Robert will be sending to know why we couldn't say what we had to say to each other down in the dining-room; and on this occasion I echo his sentiments."

CHAPTER XVII.

SIX O'CLOCK.

WOMEN'S demands almost invariably grow in proportion to the concessions made to them. Daisy having succeeded in keeping her cousin one day longer at Brighton than he had intended remaining, now felt—or feigned—that life would be dark to her if he did not come up and “sit for an hour or two in the garden with her the following morning.”

“But, Daisy, you forget my guests at Goring Place. I must get back to them.”

“You're not going back there, straight? You'll stay in London?”

“Only to see my publishers.”

“You'll go to Roehampton; now, won't you?”

“Well; just to see the Walshes; yes.”

“Now, a few hours can't make any difference,

Walter; think how long it will be before I see you again perhaps, and do come and sit for an hour or two under that weeping elm to-morrow morning; it will make me like the place better. I shall go there and think of you whenever I feel too tired to stand the Osbornes."

"Well; I suppose I must stay; but mind Daisy! I shall be obliged to leave by the two o'clock train."

"Then come to me at eleven. How can you think so much about your book now? You needn't write now—you don't want the money. I can't imagine how you can care to bother yourself."

He laughed. "You sordid-minded Daisy; perhaps you're right after all; it may be that the game isn't worth the candle. Well, I'll come at eleven. Good-night, young lady."

Before he went to her the following morning he strolled down on to the pier, and stood at the extreme end, looking out over the sea for a time. There was that dark slaty-blue tint over it which it frequently has in September, especially just before a thunderstorm. "Not that we are likely to have one now," he thought, looking up at the clear cloudless sky. But though the sky was

bright and cloudless, there was a something oppressively sultry in the air. "Soda-water and sherry will be pleasant under that weeping elm," he thought. "I wonder if the old lady will be shocked if I suggest it."

He turned round now, and leaned his back against the wood-work, and looked round lazily over the numerous groups of girls who were scattered about on the benches. They were of all orders of British beauty; and the majority of them were immersed in literature, and had their long damp hair unbound and hanging loosely over their shoulders, in order that it might derive the fullest benefit from the sea air, and be seen in all the bravery of its luxuriance by any chance beholder. But pretty, or at least, pleasing-looking as the most of them undoubtedly were, there was not one so attractive in his eyes as either of those two girls who had met on horseback the night before in the shaded road near Portslade.

It is a useful lesson to a novelist to go and stand on the pier at Brighton during the season. He or she is almost sure to come away sadder and humbler, if not wiser, for the experiment. In some fair hand or other you are sure to see one of

your own works—perhaps your cherished one—the one at which you laboured the hardest—the one into which you put your best—the one in which you flattered yourself that the various shades of character were delineated delicately and sharply—the one that, in the exquisite phraseology of reviewers, you felt persuaded must be perused with unabated interest from the first page to the last. Go to Brighton pier, deluded one, and give your pride a fall. Mark the lassitude with which the pages are turned; observe the colossal skipping that goes on; see and shiver at the supine indifference with which the first volume is laid down, and the second never taken up. Constrain yourself to listen to a few of the verbal ingenuous criticisms that are passed upon your offspring by a brace of pretty girls. It may do you good to hear that your “last was dull enough, but this is ever-so-much worse”—it may do you good eventually; but if it does not give you creepy sensations at the moment, you are not made of the ordinary fiction-writer’s flesh. You may come out of it purified and refined; but there is no question about its being a very fiery furnace of an ordeal.

But the great law of compensation works even

under these humiliating circumstances. You can always analyse your most inglorious sensations, and get something good, or at least useful, out of them. At least, men may do this ; women, unfortunately, are rarely gifted with the analytical mind.

At any rate, Walter Goring redeemed the time this morning, by thinking out an essay on the subject of the numberless little rifts which make all music mute in the heart of man very often. No matter how noble, exalted, heaven-born, the motive of the music may be, there comes a moment when some fragment of the earth earthy strikes upon the life lute, and produces discord surely—perhaps silence.

As he stood there thinking something to the effect of the foregoing passage, he saw advancing towards him that pair whom Daisy and himself had met the night before. Charlie at the same moment caught sight of him, and her face brightened visibly, and he, marking the pleasure that she showed so freely, went forward to meet her.

Even in the few seconds that were employed in gaining them, Walter Goring had time to see clearly “how things were.” There was an unmis-

takable air of being engaged about the tall, handsome, healthy-looking gentleman who walked by Miss St. John's side, glancing down upon her with unfeigned pride and pleasure, and unmistakable proprietorship. Charlie had a yachting dress on, and her hands were in the pockets thereof, and she kept her face set steadily straight before her. But the man by her side kept on bending his head, and looking down into her eyes in a way that left no room for doubt.

Miss St. John was one who, if she desired to speak to a man, never hesitated an instant about doing so. Therefore, when she saw Walter Goring coming to meet her, she quickened her pace a little, took her hand out of her pocket, and held it out to him with a hearty—

“Mr. Goring, I am so glad to see you again.”

“And I'm delighted to see you—better; I heard of your illness from Mrs. Walsh.”

“Yes; I've had a fever, but I'm not infectious at all, now.” Then she turned a little towards Mr. Fellowes, and added, “Allow me to introduce you and Mr. Fellowes to each other.”

“We ought to have known something of each other before,” Mr. Fellowes said, cordially holding

out his hand, and Walter Goring took it as cordially, saying,

“My Norfolk neighbour then, I presume; we have been unfortunate in finding each other out, Mr. Fellowes.”

“Yes, very; my sister forwarded me your note about the battue only yesterday, or I should have replied to it. How do you find the game on your land this year?”

Then the two men got talking the usual sporting talk, and Charlie stood by and listened.

After a while they strolled up and down. The mere fact of their lands adjoining gave these men much in common at their first meeting even, more especially as one was desirous of giving all the local information in his power, and the other of receiving it.

“You were not much at Goring Place in your uncle’s lifetime?”

“Very rarely—never since I was a boy; we were very good friends, you know, but he never asked me, so I never went; did you see much of him?”

“Why no; the fact is, there had been some sort of dispute about a right of way between my father

and him, and Mr. Goring couldn't forget it ; I dare say you've heard the story."

"Clarke told me something about it ; we must open up the lane again, for it's a short cut from The Hurst to Goring Place," Walter said, looking at Charlie.

"Is Goring Place so near The Hurst?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss St. John."

"She'll see for herself soon how near it is, I hope," Mr. Fellowes put in buoyantly ; and then Charlie saw that Mr. Goring looked at her steadily again, and she could not keep down a blush.

"I'm delighted to hear it," he was beginning, when she stopped him.

"When are you going to write another novel, Mr. Goring?"

"I have just finished one—it will soon be out, and I shall have the honour of presenting it to you."

"You won't have much time for writing now," Mr. Fellowes remarked.

"Shall I not? It seems to me that if I stay at Goring Place I shall have little to do save write."

"The hounds meet three times a week, close to us ; you'll join the Hunt of course?"

“Undoubtedly.”

“I often thought it a pity that your uncle didn't keep up the kennels; you know your grandfather hunted a pack of foxhounds for years. I wish you'd start them again!”

“Don't do it, Mr. Goring, if it will take up all your time,” Charlie said, shaking her head and half laughing.

“I submit to your decree; I shall not do it,” he said, lifting his hat as he spoke; “and now I must say good-by, I fear. I have an appointment with my cousin, Miss Goring, to whom I trust I may shortly have the honour of introducing you, Miss St. John.”

“Ah! your uncle left a daughter, didn't he?” Mr. Fellowes asked.

“Yes!” Walter answered; “the lady I was riding with last night; I am left her guardian, so you see I have plenty to do without starting a pack of foxhounds.”

“I shall like to know her very much,” Charlie said, looking away out over the sea, half abstractedly; “it was like a poem last night, I thought, and she was the sweetest rhyme in it.”

Walter made no answer; he understood her

fully, though her sentence had not been too coherently worded. Mr. Fellowes looked perplexed, then it appeared to strike him that it was his part to explain away anything that seemed strange in Charlie.

“Miss St. John has got it into her head that we had all met in that road, in that way before, either in a dream, or—or before the Deluge, I think she says; I tell her it’s the effects of the fever.”

“I think so too,” Walter replied, and his answer might have been an agreement to either proposition. Mr. Fellowes held that it was complete coincidence with his fever theory, and was satisfied; but Charlie met his eyes, and was satisfied too. Then once more they said ‘good-by’ and parted.

“He seems to be a splendid fellow,” Mr. Fellowes remarked enthusiastically, as soon as Walter was out of ear-shot. “I’m very glad that we shall have him for our neighbour.”

This identification of her with himself was immediate perhaps, considering that he had only proposed to her the previous night. But Charlie did not object to it at all. She did not notice it, in fact, for she had thrown herself into the future, and was employed in wondering what her life would be like

down in that place of which the two men had been speaking so familiarly, the place of which she was to be the mistress.

Meanwhile Walter was slowly walking up to keep his appointment with Daisy. It has been said that he saw "how it was" at the first glance he gave to Mr. Fellowes and Charlie. And during their interview his first impression had received confirmation strong. "Evidently she's going to marry him," he thought; "he seems a capital fellow, but scarcely the sort of husband for her I should fancy." Then he went on pondering over the consistent inconsistency which nearly every woman displays. He recalled to his mind her little brief bursts of ambitious enthusiasm, that night he had met her at the Walshes'. He remembered those strong though vague aspirations, those mental hungerings and thirstings after more satisfying sustenance than had yet fallen to her share, to which she had given vent. He reminded himself of the promise she had given, half to him and half to herself, about fixing upon an aim, and making an object for herself in life. All these things he remembered, as he walked along, and he laughed almost bitterly as he thought "And it has all ended in this—that she is going to

marry the first fellow who has asked her ! Well, she'll be a good friend for Daisy, when Daisy comes to Goring Place."

He could not help speculating a good deal about Miss St. John. He found himself marvelling how she would stand life, day after day, all the year round, at that red house which he could see from his drawing-room windows. There was something to him absolutely incongruous in this girl settling down in such a way ; he wondered what she would do with herself. He never thought of the possibility of her employing herself in household matters. She was an essentially feminine-looking woman, small and delicately made, and eminently graceful in gait and figure ; but he could not imagine her subsiding into the purely domestic animal. " Women are fearfully and wonderfully constituted, and no mistake," he thought to himself ; " to think that a girl like that should go and voluntarily vow to remain with a good fellow enough, but one who palpably hasn't an idea in common with herself, for the whole term of her natural life ; it's almost monstrous, that because this ghastly incongruous sacrifice is made under the name of marriage, girls should make it without reproach."

He could not restrain his thoughts from running a-head about her. For a few years she would be a young and very interesting Mrs. Fellowes, despite that "As the husband is, the wife is" creed in which he had belief. But how about her as a middle-aged Mrs. Fellowes? Would that curious something which there was about her, and which made her a more interesting and exciting study than the mass of girls, though of little beauty—would this something gradually ebb away and leave her a mere sonsy matron, with sharp words on her tongue for rebellious children, and a keen eye for the peccadilloes of her maids? Would she in time come to dress with delight for a dull dinner-party down there, a dinner-party wanting in even those elements of amusements and interest which she had found insufficient at the Walshes'? Would she tone down into a tame Lady Bountiful? Would she come to look upon art and literature with the hazy gaze those do bestow upon them who know themselves to be a long way off, and have no desire to come any nearer? Above all, would she ever learn to train her looks, and guard them, and not seem to give them gladly and freely to a man—even a stranger—who could read them aright? "I am

glad The Hurst is so near to Goring Place, for I shall like to see how she goes on" he thought, as he turned into the garden where Daisy, gracefully posed under the elm, sat awaiting him. Psychologically then, these two girls were almost of equal interest to him; but he read what Charlie's life had been through her acts and words, more clearly than he read Daisy's. Naturally, therefore, Daisy at present commanded more of his thoughts, and had a larger portion of his speculative interest.

Daisy presented herself, this morning, under a different aspect to any in which he had hitherto seen her. In the first place, she "took him more for granted," in a way that he could not have defined, but that he felt keenly. On former occasions, when she had made appeals to his fraternal affection and complaisance, she had done it in such a way that he could but remember that he was not her brother, and feel that she remembered it too. But this morning, some fine, almost imperceptible, but most telling change had come over her. She was very nice, very graceful and girlish, and amiable. But she did not make herself lithe and willowy at him; she did not appeal to him; she was in fact an utterly different Daisy from the one who had laid

her hand on his shoulder and her head on his breast but the other day. She called him Walter, without the slightest attempt at a plaintive intonation. She volunteered a promise to stay and make the best of things at Brighton for as long a time as he liked. She told him that she was quite alive to the impossibility of her living at Goring Place until he was married. "And I do hope you will marry soon, Walter; it will be so much better for me in every way when you are married—if your wife will only like me." On the whole, despite the amiability of this speech, Walter would rather that she had not made it.

Then she went on to tell him why she had been so desirous of seeing him this morning. It had been with no romantic notion of having a few soothing "last moments" with him—that was clear.

"There are two or three points that you had better settle with her," she nodded towards the house, indicating thus that she was alluding to Mrs. Osborne, "before you go—for of course, you won't come to Brighton again for a long time—there's really nothing to bring you."

"To see you, Daisy; but what are the points?"

“ Oh ! as to seeing me, that’s understood. We shall always be glad to see each other, that’s of course. What I want you to tell her is, that I am not to be expected to ride out with her daughter ; Miss Osborne goes out with a troop and a riding-master, and I won’t do it.”

“ I should think not ; I’ll see about a steady groom being at your disposal before I leave. I meant to do it, even if you hadn’t spoken : don’t think me regardless of your comfort, Daisy ? ”

He spoke almost tenderly ; it was not exactly pleasant to him to be put off from his former position in this way. But she would not respond to the tenderness at all. She only said,—

“ That’s so good of you, Walter ; and I’m to go out when I please ? ”

“ My dear girl ; you’re not in a prison.”

“ I know that very well ; but it had better be understood that I do as I like in this matter. To-day, when I was coming out here, she began, ‘ Oh ! Miss Goring, you’ll find it too hot in the garden, I think.’ I told her that was my look out, and she didn’t seem to like it ; now if she doesn’t want me to speak to her in that way, she had better not interfere with me.”

"Well, Daisy, I will try to meet your views," he said; and Daisy put her yellow head against the back of the garden-bench and thanked him, and apparently had nothing further to say.

Before he left, he told her about meeting Miss St. John on the pier, and of the almost certainty he felt that Miss St. John would be their neighbour eventually.

"Your neighbour, you mean. I should be wretched if I thought Goring Place was to be my home for ever and ever."

He was disgusted with himself for suffering himself to be mortified by the expression of this girl's fickleness and indifference. Nevertheless, he was mortified. He sat in silence, waiting for her to speak; when she did so at last, it was only to say,—

"When am I to have the three thousand pounds that my father left me?"

"You may have it when you like. What do you want with it?"

"I want nothing, but I fancy a dozen things. Let me have five hundred of it—may I? or a thousand—may I?"

"My dear child; for what?"

"Why, to spend to be sure," she replied quickly;

“ to spend in any way I please, and not to have to give an account of it ; for that I won’t do.”

“ You shall have it, if you will,” he answered. The thought struck him that she might want it for some of those people with whom she had been brought up. Perhaps even for her Mother ! But he would not question her.

“ You shall have it, Daisy,” he repeated. Then he stood up and bid her “ good by ; ” and she gave him her hand in farewell, coolly and collectedly, and was no more like the Daisy who had warmed him with her touch, and melted him by her tears the other day, than snow is like fire. He went away, feeling very sorry for this change in her—this change, of which he had really no right to complain. He went away, feeling very sorry, but more puzzled. “ What can have come over the girl,” he thought ; “ she can’t be such a false-hearted little cat as to dislike me after her manner even yesterday.” He thought about her a good deal—till the train stopped at the Victoria station in fact. Then he got out, and hailed a cab, and began to think about what terms he should ask for his book as he was driven to his publisher’s. His heart was very much set on this work making a conspicuous success, for his last

had been reviled by more than one of the literary journals; and he had smarted and been very sore—as the stoutest are wont to be when their tender spots are lashed, however vigorously they may deny the soft impeachment. He had smarted and been very sore, and had striven earnestly to amend. Now he wanted to see the fruits of the castigations and the consideration he had given them made public. So, now that it had come to the point of transacting the immediate preliminary business, previous to publication, his mind was very much engaged upon his book to the exclusion of all other considerations.

The interview was agreeable, not to say exhilarating. No matter, whether a man be a large landed proprietor, and in possession of a good yearly income or not, the satisfaction of knowing that the work of his brain is of sufficiently well-known and recognised merit to command a good price, is intense. “Mr. Goring’s last book had not been a success;” of that his publisher mildly, but firmly reminded him. But this one, which it was proposed should come out at a more auspicious season—and which, no doubt, was free from the trifling defects of style which—more than the adverse criti-

cism—had over-ridden the last, might be safely prophesied to “go.” The end of it was, that the book was to be announced immediately, as “ready on the 2nd of November,” and the copyright for three years was made over to the firm for the sum of 800*l*. It is well to reward authors liberally—at least in fiction.

“Now for Roehampton,” he said to himself when he came out of the publishing office; “how glad they’ll be to find it all done. I believe if she hadn’t urged me on, I should never have made the requisite effort to finish it, after finding myself master of Goring Place; as for old Ralph! he’ll be better pleased than if all his own pictures get well hung next year.”

There was great pleasure to the young man in this assured feeling which he had, of receiving a warm welcome from them at Roehampton. He had a good many friends, for he was well liked by most men and women; but there was the bond of many years’ good fellowship (if such an expression may be permitted, where there is a lady concerned), between the Walshes and himself. He recalled now, as he drove down to their house, the frantic zeal which Ralph had displayed when his (Walter’s)

first book had come out, and stormed fame. He remembered well the chagrin the kind-hearted fellow had been unable to conceal when the last had been reviled! While, as for her; few men, he felt persuaded, had such a friend as he had in "his goddess."

The day was very bright when he leapt out of the cab at the door of the Roehampton house. The garden was gorgeous with those glories of the autumn, the gladiolus and dahlia. Rich beds of bloom lay scattered about, breaking the expanse of deep green turf every here and there; and the light came down from the setting sun, and relieved the intensity of colour—of those masses of crimson and of scarlet which would otherwise have made the eyes throb to look upon them. The dying day was very fair;—bright as a child's smile—a dialogue by Shirley Brooks—or Walter Goring's own prospects, as they were known to the world.

There was a great air of hush and quiet over the house when he turned to it, after surveying this brightness for a few moments. The hall door stood open, as was usual in that hospitable mansion in the summer, but all the blinds were drawn down,

and there was no sound of voices and laughter from the drawing-room, where voices and laughter were to be heard at most times, "I hope they're not gone out," he thought; "she's quite capable of getting enraged with me for not being here before, and going for a drive; the goddess is only a woman." Then he went into the hall, and was about to shout out, "Ralph!" when a servant came upon him suddenly from the back regions—a girl, with a face all blurred with tears and blanched with fear, and said to him before he could ask her "What's the matter?"

"Oh! sir; poor master is dead!"

It was like a blow on the chest to him. His heart bounded with a sudden spasm of pain, to recover which he had to gasp for breath—almost as a woman might have done. He was utterly unnerved by the tidings—by the thought of this good, valued, old friend, called with such ghastly celerity to his last account. No homily, however eloquent, from the lips of the grandest elocutionist comes home to the heart with the terrible force of the one the heart reads to itself in the first moment of hearing of that, from which we all pray to be delivered—sudden death.

His first question was, "Where is she—your mistress, I mean? Let her know I'm here."

"Master's brother's wife is here, sir," she answered, and as she said this, a lady came out from one of the rooms with an arranged look of grief on her face, and a good deal of handkerchief in her hand. He introduced himself hurriedly.

"I am Mr. Goring, an old friend of ——," he could not say "Ralph's," the tears in his throat would not let him utter it; so he paused, and made an effort to swallow his emotion.

The lady made some remark, to the effect of its being an awful calamity, and what we all must prepare for and submit to; her remarks were not original. He cut them short.

"I have sent to tell Mrs. Walsh that I am here," he said. The British matron bridled without delay.

"It is impossible that my sister-in-law can see you," she said, "utterly impossible; but of course you are aware of that——"

"She *will* see me," Walter interrupted; "whom should she see? Of course, I shall go to her as I should have gone to Ralph, had she died and left him; I have lost too valued a friend not to go at once to the other one who loved him best."

He passed her as he spoke, and made his way upstairs ; on the landing he was met by the servant whom he had sent to tell her mistress that he had come, and he stopped to ask "how and when it happened?" "He died last night about six o'clock," the girl told him ; "he had a terrible shock in town in the morning ; he went up in the carriage, and one of the horses took fright and ran right into an omnibus-pole, and was staked in the chest and killed. Master didn't say much at the time, but it gave him a shock, and the doctors' say it was heart complaint."

"Six o'clock," he thought, as he went on to the room in which he was told he would find her. "Six o'clock ! just the hour when I met that girl and her lover under the trees ; it was all brightness and beauty and peace about me, and *she* was in such sorrow, poor thing !" then he opened the door and found himself in the presence of the widow.

She was leaning back in an easy chair. There were no tears in her eyes, and there was no white emblem of woe in her hand. She looked calm and composed as usual, but her face was very pale. He went up and took her hand, and as soon as she

felt his clasp, her tears and words flowed together. It was a thoroughly womanly plaint that she made.

“If you had been up in town with him, perhaps it wouldn't have happened.” And he answered,—

“God knows! but I shall never forgive myself for being away from you last night.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WEDDING TOUR.

THE autumnal tints were fading fast. Warmth and colour were waning from off the earth. There were storm-clouds in the sky. Fogs and fires had set in. There were more leaves dead and rotting on the ground than there were on the trees. In short, it was dreary dark November when the threads of the story are taken up again.

Miss St. John was no more ; she was merged in Mrs. Fellowes, and she was coming home to The Hurst, her husband's house, to-night.

They had been married about the middle of October. Mr. Fellowes was no friend to unnecessary delay, and Charlie not finding the engagement ideally pleasant, was glad enough to shorten it. She was impatient, in truth, to see how she and the life she had promised to live agreed with one

another. Therefore, there had been no hesitation on either side in the matter, and they were married in October.

There had been little said about any member of his family coming to his wedding, and not one of them had come. He had only a mother and a sister, and the one was too averse to railway travelling, and the other too averse to festivities of any sort to come up to London to a wedding, he had told them. Their non-appearance was taken quite as a matter of course by Charlie; she had not regarded it as a sign of any special antagonism to herself.

Immediately after their marriage they had gone to Paris, and had not enjoyed themselves at all. The bridegroom knew nothing of either the pleasures or pit-falls of that city, consequently he moved as one in the dark, and Charlie grew impatient. When they had been to the Opera and two or three of the theatres, he recommended quiet strenuously, not knowing where the ice was thin on that glittering surface which stretched before him. But Charlie had not married Mr. Fellowes and come to Paris to be quiet. She could have gone on being that in the dull Bayswater square.

Therefore she urged him to "find out, if he didn't know, about places," and he found out many things, and wished himself back at The Hurst. On the whole, it was unfortunate that he should have taken her at first to a place where he could not move freely, and as one who was sure of himself. He looked happy enough always, but she fancied that there was the expression on his face of being very much obliged to any one who would put him right. Altogether the wedding tour was a mistake. Charlie had dreamt of Paris—had longed for it with the feverish longing one has for it and the East, after hearing much about them. When she gained it at last, there was little for her to do, save to sit down and weep over illusion the —th dispelled.

He was very kind and gentle to her, very patient and forbearing, no matter how her spirits ran down. He was always heaping presents upon her, and wanting her to eat. His care of her was prodigious, not to say oppressive. She had the feeling of being liable to break upon her, whenever she went out with him. On the whole, she would willingly have bartered away a considerable portion of this care and attention in exchange for the man

she had married being able to impart one single idea that she couldn't get out of Bradshaw relating to the place to which he had brought her. Whether this was an idle longing or not, it certainly was not gratified. She was not sorry when he said, as he did when they had been there three weeks, "After all, Charlie, this place isn't half as gay as they say. What do you think about going home?"

"I think it would be the best thing we can do," she replied, and she did not add that she thought perhaps other people set about finding Paris pleasant in another way.

However, they did not go straight back to The Hurst from Paris. They branched off to the Isle of Wight, and spent a fortnight there, during which fortnight they were very happy, and explored the island thoroughly, Charlie on a rough pony and Mr. Fellowes on foot. Mrs. Fellowes had never experienced such happiness in her life as she felt the whole of this fortnight. It was very patent to her that she was as the apple of his eye to this man—that she was precious to him beyond price. He showed his devotion to, and appreciation of, her in a way that was clear without being cloying.

His wishes always marched with hers; whither she went he was only too happy to follow, not in blind submission, but with a frank air of finding that which she thought good, the best, most beautiful, and politic path. A strong feeling of friendship sprang up between them in addition to the warm passion he felt for her, and the genuine though weaker love she had for him. They learnt to know each other well, so she believed; to know and to have such reliance on each other that "no future small discrepancies in the conduct of either would have the power to shake the foundation of that trust which was being laid between them in these days." This she told herself, and grew glad and grateful. Her woman's heart and pride were both entirely carried by the devotion he displayed. Literally, he was always at her side; metaphorically, he was very much at her feet; and she who had never been the recipient of such unswerving open attentions before, was a rarely gracious sovereign to this her loving vassal. She seemed to be re-juvenated and to grow prettier daily—his tenderness for her youth and admiration for the good looks she possessed were so evident and inspiring. In short, he was so proud of his wife that she grew fondly proud of

him, and showed that she was so openly, in a way that frequently brought a flash of pleasure to his face, and something like tears in his eyes, as he looked down upon her riding along on the little pony by his side. The handsome manly bridegroom and the graceful intellectual bride were very pleasant to behold altogether. At last they put an end to the joyous period, and went home to The Hurst, reaching it about six o'clock one damp, dismal November evening.

Mrs. Fellowes was very eager to see her future home as soon as she found herself fairly on her road to it. Very eager to see it, and very curious on the subject of it. Hitherto she had asked but very few questions respecting either it or his friends and relations; and he, for the same reason as she had refrained from asking, had refrained from telling anything—namely, he had not thought of doing so. But when, at about ten minutes to six on the evening of their return, he looked out of the railway carriage window into the drizzle, and said—

“Charlie, dear, if it wasn't for this mist you'd see The Hurst down there between those trees; we shall be there directly,” she exclaimed—

“I'm so impatient to see it. I'm longing to be

the mistress of your house, Harry ; I will be such a nice one, and such a nice wife, darling. Oh ? when shall I see your mother and sister ? I'd ——”

She was going to say she “ had forgotten them,” but it occurred to her that it would be perhaps just as well that she should not go into residence in the palace of truth in this way, therefore she checked herself on the brink of the speech.

“ You will see them to-night. A ‘ nice wife ! ’ I know you will be that, my pet. ‘ Nice ! ’ you’ll be the dearest and sweetest in the world.”

“ They live near us, then ? Is their house in the village ? ”

She really did not care where their house was, or where they lived, but she wanted to please her husband by appearing interested about his relatives, although they had abstained from any ardent expression of interest about her. She was the triumphant one, the reigning star of his affections, the pivot on which each one of his thoughts turned ; she could afford to be generous.

“ Near us ! Why, they live at The Hurst ; didn’t you know that ? ” he answered ; and the train stopping at the moment, she had no time to say more than—

“Know it; how should I, when you have never told me, Harry?”

There was no time to say more about them, or to think more about them, from that moment until they reached The Hurst. Then they were brought before her prominently, and she could not avoid giving them due consideration.

Perhaps they were right. Maybe they had some sort of reason and justice on their side. It is very hard to say whether they were or not; it is always in fact hard, nay more, impossible, to judge justly of the acts of another, so many motives sway them of which we are ignorant; they are influenced by so many reasons of which we never so much as heard; they have their own thoughts about things evolved by Heaven knows what; they are so much more to themselves, and consequently so much more alive to all that concerns themselves, than they are to us. All these causes, and a dozen others, combine to render it a hard matter indeed for anyone to judge anyone else with perfect equity and justice.

Therefore it is a difficult matter to say whether or not old Mrs. Fellowes and her daughter were right, in regarding the wife of their son and brother

as an interloper from the first. That they did so regard her there can be no manner of doubt; but whether or not they were wholly wrong in doing so, remains an open question.

Henry Fellowes had brought the infliction of this aggrieved ill-will upon himself, or rather upon his wife, by his own injudicious conduct from his earliest manhood. The yoke of his mother had never been easy, and the burden of his sister had never been light; but he had fitted his neck to the one, and adjusted the latter to his back for a great many years, as if he had rather liked them than not. Now he was to reap his reward.

With a quiet persistence that had been almost a beautiful thing in itself from its unvarying uniformity, Mrs. Fellowes had detected flaws and blemishes in every girl who had come under her son's notice, from the time of his becoming a marriageable man up to the present moment. The boldest laid down their arms before her, and said to the ambition which might have been theirs for a brief period to become mistress of The Hurst, "Avaunt, foul fiend!" The clear-sighted manner in which she saw whatever was not perfect in them, and the admirably lucid way in which she pointed

out their imperfections to her son, had become a proverb in their part of the county. She was charmingly consistent in seeing nought but guile in any young woman who might possibly succeed her at The Hurst. She always remembered how some one with just such a personal attribute or mental quality as Henry chanced to find pleasing or good in any girl, had gone wrong, or nearly gone wrong, or was said to have been quite ready to go wrong, by some veracious chroniclers. If a girl seemed kind to him, then his mother shook her head in sorrow and anger, and quoted a sweet distich, to the effect of a pear that would drop without shaking the tree, being too mellow for her, or an honourable man. Did young ladyhood seem cool and self-possessed, and not at all conscious of the claims of Mr. Fellowes of The Hurst, then Mrs. Fellowes was sorry to see it, and sorry to say it; but that prudish manner was *the* very last she should desire to see in the wife of a son of hers. In fact, she hedged him in and about with doubt, distrust, and dread, with such full effect, that he passed through that garden of beauty and never gave so much as a thought after he was twenty-two to plucking one of the blooms for himself. Norfolk is a rare place for

pretty women,—its witches will not even yield the palm to those of Lancashire; but Mr. Henry Fellowes passed unscathed through their ranks, because his mother bid him do so.

Norfolk is a rare place for pretty women. What a fair sisterhood that was from which I gained my first childish impressions of loveliness and grace. What a pleasant light that loveliness threw over the tiny sea-side village in which they, the far-famed beauties of West Norfolk, dwelt. Some of them have pretty daughters of their own now; and are as charming perhaps in their brilliant matronhood as they were in their fresh blooming girlhood. That past prettiness deserves to be commemorated though—it was so marvellously bright a thing.

Whatever the cause, the result is this: that the purely-bred Norfolk women combine form and colour in their greatest perfection, in an almost exceptional manner. The women of the Western counties are fair and luxuriant, but they are wanting in that symmetry of limb which is a distinguishing characteristic of their Norfolk sisters, whose small well-shaped feet and hands add to their look of race. Whether or not there was a strong Southern dash in their Scandinavian pro-

genitors, I am not sufficiently well up in the history of my favourite county to determine ; but this much is certain, that they possess, in addition to the skin of the North, the subtle charm of shape which belongs of right to the South. Nevertheless, maternal instincts had guided Henry Fellowes safe and sure through the ranks of the daughters of the land for many years, and now all her precautions were proved idler than a dream, for he had gone out and married a stranger without a penny. Charlie little knew what she was going to face when she passed quickly under the portals of The Hurst by her husband's side. There was not the slightest doubt in her heart as she raised her eyes to his face, and smiled brightly in response to his hearty—

“God bless you, my darling, and make you happy here !”

He led her straight through the hall into a large, sombre, insufficiently lighted room, which they discovered to be void of all human furniture immediately on entering it. Charlie made for the fire at once, and as she stood over it warming her hands, and looking round her half-curiously, half-doubtfully (the room and all in it were so uncompromis-

ingly square), Mr. Fellowes turned to the servant who had followed them, and said—

“Go and let your mistress—my mother—know that Mrs. Fellowes and I are here.”

“My mistress and Miss Dinah are in the dining-room, sir,” the man replied; and Henry Fellowes was beginning to mutter something in an annoyed tone, when Charlie turned to him with a brighter flash on her face than the fire would have had the power to fling.

“Shall we go to them, Harry? Yes, come.”

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHILLING RECEPTION.

THEY went out of the square drawing-room across the hall, and into another room where crimson curtains and a blazing fire and plenty of glass and gleaming silver on a well-arranged dining-table, gave them a pleasant sense of warmth and comfort. In an arm-chair on one side of the fire-place an old lady, with a face rendered still paler than was natural to it by the severe contrast of a dead-black front, and a little half-square shawl pinned with severe exactitude over her shoulders, sat rigidly awaiting them. Opposite to her, in the other arm-chair, was a middle-aged woman, tall and large, and as square, Charlie thought, at the first glance, as the drawing-room from whence they had just come.

The newly-married pair came on into the room, and as they did so Miss Dinah rose, but the old

lady kept her seat. Almost unconsciously Charlie came to a stand-still; she could not go on to them; there was no welcome from either of those women for her.

Henry Fellowes went over and kissed his mother, then turned and held one hand out to his sister the other to his wife. "Well, mother, I have brought you home a new daughter at last, you see," he said, with a poor attempt at a laugh; and she replied—

"I see you have, Henry;" and then rose up for an instant and held out a straight hand with rigid fingers to Charlie, and added—

"I'm afraid you have had a wet journey, Mrs. Henry; your train was a little late; I am afraid the dinner won't be the better for waiting."

Charlie took the rigid fingers and did not know what to do with them. It was impossible to get up spurious enthusiasm, and make the least attempt to press the hand of an old woman who evidently would not have offered it at all if she could have avoided doing so. Therefore Charlie took it for an instant, and then let it go, saying with a brighter light in her eyes than Henry Fellowes had ever seen there before—

"Perhaps I had better go and get ready for dinner, Harry, and not keep it waiting any longer."

"Perhaps you had, dear; here, I'll come up with you, when Dinah's spoken to you."

He put his hands on his wife's shoulders, and made her face round immediately in front of his tall, gaunt sister. "I hope you'll find everything comfortable in your room, Mrs. Henry," the latter said hurriedly. The laughing face that was brought under Miss Dinah's notice looked so thoroughly cognisant of her dislike, and so defiant of it in a way, that Miss Fellowes lost her self possession.

When Charlie reached her own room she could not conscientiously say that she did find everything comfortable in it. There was no fire, and no hot water, and no sofa, and no easy chair. There were abundant signs of wealth in handsome carved mahogany bed-posts, and wardrobes, and dressing-tables, but there was neither comfort, according to the modern luxurious acceptation of the word, or beauty. In fact, it was not at all the sort of room to meet the views of a bride with æsthetic proclivities.

"Never mind, I'll freeze to-night," she said laughingly, when her husband looked blank at the

empty stove and the cold water. "You go down, or to your dressing-room, and I'll astonish them by being ready so quickly Harry." Then, when she had banished him, she knelt down before one of her trunks and took out some of her toilet paraphernalia, and wondered whether they were going to have the grace to send anyone to assist her in case she needed assistance.

Not that in reality she needed any, but she was the mistress of the house, and as such it ought to have been at her command she felt. However, modern costume has done away with a great deal of female incapacity; if need were, Charlie could have dressed for a ball unaided and alone. So now, when she had brushed out her short bright brown hair, and put on fresh cuffs and a collar, she was ready; and as soon as she was ready, she went to look for her husband.

She had said to him—"go down, or into your dressing-room," and she now looked for a dressing-room in which to find him. In her own room were numerous big heavy doors, but they all led into large commodious dark closets; there was no egress to any smaller room, and with a most natural scoff at the awkwardness of old-fashioned arrangements,

she resolved to go down and face them by herself, since she could not find her husband.

He meanwhile had run down into the dining-room again, to do what a man should never do with women, temporise. He had known all along, that marry when or whom he would, his mother and his sister would be antagonistic to his wife. But after meeting and falling in love with Charlie St. John, he had put all thoughts of maternal wrath away from him, until now that it was brought vividly before him, and unpleasantly before Charlie.

When he went back alone, leaving Charlie kneeling before her black trunk, he began at once eagerly to his mother.

"Don't you think I have done well, mother? She'll make things as pleasant as possible, if you'll only meet her half way; you know *she* couldn't help the train being late, and now she's hurrying herself tremendously, in order not to keep you waiting; but I say, Dinah, things should have been arranged a little better in our room, I think!"

"I have had the best room prepared for your wife, Henry," Miss Dinah replied, in tones that would have led a stranger to suppose that The Hurst was hers, and not her brother's.

“And from what you had said, we did not expect a fine lady,” his mother chimed in.

“Mother, she isn’t that,” he said deprecatingly. He was such a big boy, and such a big booby, in his honest affection for the three women to whom he was nearest and dearest. He wanted all things to be so pleasant, without having the faintest idea how to make them so. Then he went over to his mother and leant upon the back of her chair, and asked very fondly, but almost too humbly—

“Do seem a little glad to see her when she comes down? She is the dearest girl—much too good for such a rough as I am; don’t let her think you didn’t want her here.”

Mrs. Fellowes senior commenced working her lips and blinking her eyes. She loved her son, loved him dearly. But it was with a narrow-minded, grasping, jealous, suspicious love, that would have denied him any other all his life. Whatever wife he had won to himself, his mother would not have loved her. But a wife without money his mother could not even seem to like. So now she said, in measured tones that came out from between lips of iron—

“What I like or what I don’t like is of little con-

sequence, I am *well* aware. I'm an incumbrance and old, and not worth consulting; I know all that; but still I do own to feeling hurt that my son should have gone away and married a stranger, without even giving his mother the opportunity of cautioning him; of course I know I've no right to speak; you always would do as you liked; but it would have been better for us all, perhaps, if you had let me see this young lady before you brought her here as your wife."

"How could I have let you see her?" he asked gently; "after telling her how I loved her I couldn't have asked her to come and show herself to you, and see whether you liked her for my wife or not." He laughed as he said this, and moved away from his mother's chair in order to lean upon the mantelpiece. Mrs. Fellowes saw that he glanced impatiently towards the door also, as though he was anxious for the appearance of this bone of contention, altogether he was more independent about the matter than seemed good to her. There was a world of reproach for he did not know what, in the way in which she replied—

"I know I am getting old, but we are told by Him to honour our parents; however, I say no

more ; I only hope"—here Mrs. Fellowes paused and shook her head, and Dinah kindly put in—

"Henry might make some allowance for our natural feelings to-night ; but he makes none ; none at all."

"Natural feelings !" he asked impatiently, "have you any for her, Dinah ? do remember that she isn't here on sufferance !"

No sooner had he said it than he would have given much of his worldly wealth to have been able to recall and obliterate the memory of his words. His mother put herself into a bolt upright position in her chair, as though she knew that even comfort was grudged her in that house ; and Miss Dinah bridled and shook her head, and began to weep.

"For mercy's sake, don't cry, old girl," he said affectionately ; "what is the matter now ?"

"Oh nothing, nothing ; we shall have to learn to bear it," Mrs. Fellowes replied, solemnly shaking her head.

"To bear what, mother ?"

"To bear that we are here on sufferance," and then mother and daughter both howled, until the harassed master of the house spoke more sharply.

"If you don't want my wife to hate her home and

her husband, do make an end of this. If my happiness is anything to you, mother, don't try to wreck it, as you will if you go on in this way." Saying this, he walked away out of the room, and met Charlie descending the stairs.

"Haven't I been quick?" she asked, and his eyes brightened and his brow smoothed as she leant her arms over his shoulders, as he stood a step or two below her.

"Are you not exactly what you ought to be always?" he replied fondly. "Come back with me, pet; dinner isn't on the table yet."

"Yes, I will," she said, turning and running up before him. "Nice old house it seems, Harry; we'll soon have it lovely; this lobby with a Persian rug or two, and some divans covered with that Oriental patterned stuff, will be perfection; may I have it so?"

"You may do what you like."

"Well, I won't do much till Ellen comes to stay with me; we work capitally together, for she's more practical than I am. I know exactly what I want, and she knows how to set about achieving it. What a shame that there is no dressing-room to this room, Harry."

“Awful, isn’t it?”

“No, but awkward; we will alter that, won’t we? Do you know, my boy, I mean to have my house cited for being both well-ordered and elegant? There’s a bell; that’s dinner. Shall I do?”

She got up and stood before her husband for inspection—the brightest, most beautiful thing in his eyes that had ever illumined the old Hurst since he had known it. “Do!” he answered, taking her in his arms, and kissing her forehead. “By Jove, Charlie, I’m so proud of you, my darling, that I only wonder what I had to live for before I married you.” Then they went down to dinner together, and when they were half across the hall, he whispered, “Don’t mind the old lady much, she’s rather cranky to-night; but when she knows you——” He did not add what might be expected to occur then, but he left Charlie free to infer that it would be something more agreeable on the whole than had transpired yet.

The young mistress of The Hurst found, on entering the dining-room, that the soup was on the table, and that Mrs. Fellowes, senior, was at the head of the same. There was a place for Charlie

at the side opposite to Miss Dinah. Perhaps, in reality, it was an unimportant thing, not worthy a second thought. But Charlie gave a second thought to it as she took the place assigned to her, and wondered whether her husband saw that she was as nothing at his table.

However, she would not suffer herself to feel aggrieved or look depressed, so she strove to accomplish that most thankless of tasks, to amuse a couple of women who were not disposed to be amused by her. She talked to the mother and sister merrily of the days she had spent in the Isle of Wight; she laughed and was glad, apparently to such a degree, that waves of triumph at the brightness of this wife whom he had won, surged up into her husband's throat, and checked both his appetite and utterance, even though he saw that his mother was groaning in spirit, and his sister unmoved by the glee.

Old Mrs. Fellowes was thinking all the time that Charlie was striving to please and render herself agreeable. "The money he must have spent in gadding about in such a way, and she without a penny of her own! without a penny!—and to travel in that dress!"

Dinner was over at last, and they went away into the square drawing-room. "I hope you don't find it at all damp, Mrs. Henry?" Dinah asked, with something of an injured look, when Charlie could not repress a shiver.

"Oh, no, thank you," Charlie replied.

"We don't often use this room," Mrs. Fellowes condescended to explain. "*We* generally prefer remaining in the dining-room; furniture so soon gets spoilt if it is in constant use."

Charlie said nothing in reply to this speech, but she looked about her. The furniture was covered with a large-patterned flaring chintz, on which roses the size of cauliflowers bloomed in vulgar luxuriance. What was under this she did not know; but she felt that she could not long suffer that chintz. Presently her husband came in, and said to her,

"It's too late to show you the house to-night, Charlie; but what do you think of this room? Can you make anything of it, eh?"

"Oh, yes!" Charlie replied, cheerfully; and Mrs. Fellowes struck in, "*Make* anything of it; in what way, Henry?"

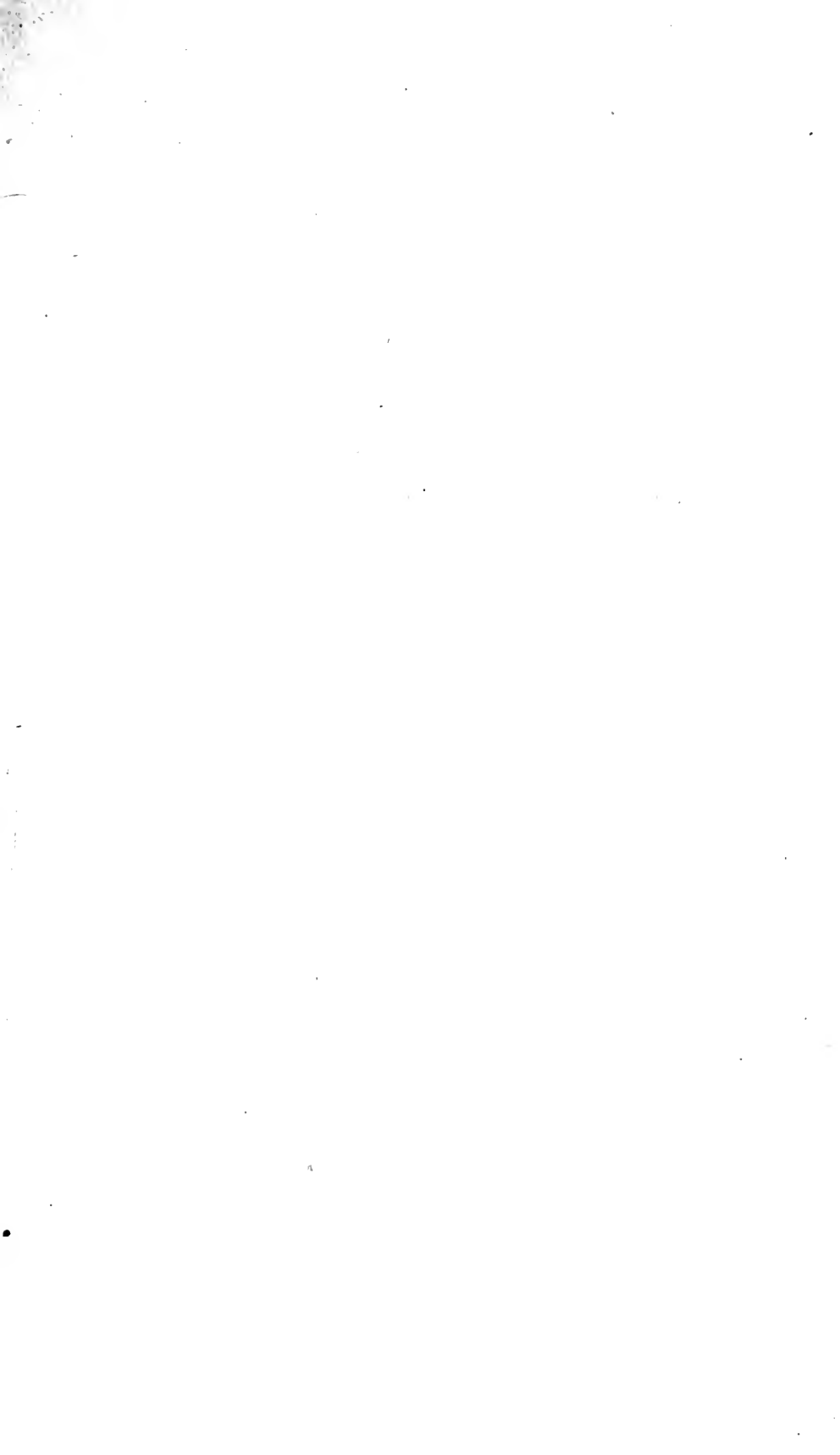
"Oh! with new furniture and fittings-up, I sup-

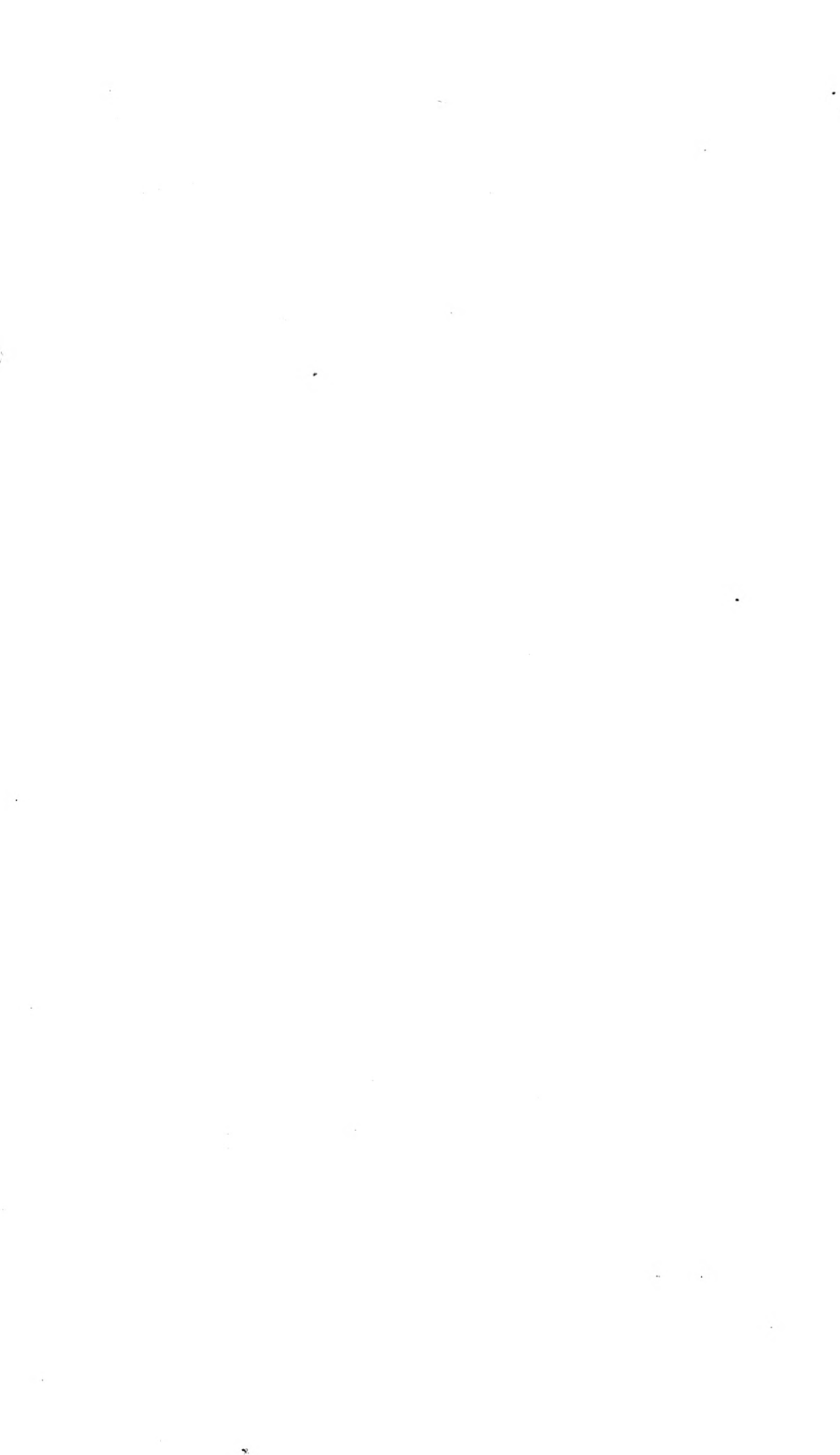
pose, mother. Now that Charlie is in it, I see how shabby it all looks."

"I shall consider it the most shameful and foolish extravagance if you do have new furniture," Mrs. Fellowes replied with severity; "but, there—I'm old, and not worth consulting, I know that."

Poor Charlie!

END OF VOL. I.





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